

TEEN GIRL FANTASY TERROR DANJAH NGUZUNGUZU 0000 ORIOLO BRIAN ENO

XLR8R

136

NOV / DEC
2010

ACCELERATING MUSIC & CULTURE
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BUILDING

AN

ICONIC

SOUND

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FOUR TET

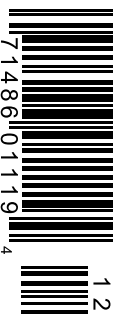
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what moves you

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FOUR TET, MOVING IN STEREO IN LOS ANGELES.

When the three of us (those three being Shawn, Tim, and I) started assembling the lineup for this issue we've dubbed Building an Iconic Sound, we hardly expected that we'd land the list of names we first threw out there. We were looking to tap into the production and song-writing processes of the folks we believe to be icons in electronic music, so we needed a techno icon ("Moby?"), a noise icon ("Someone in Neubauten?"), an indie guitar icon ("What about Robin Guthrie from Cocteau Twins?"), and on it went... Soon we were just rattling off the top artists we could think of, and as those lofty interview requests slowly became realities, it was clear that we had a killer music-technology issue on our hands.

What was even more unexpected, though, was that we got these artists to give up their trade secrets on how they crafted their early, genre-defining sounds. Ever wondered how Moby made his distorted rave basslines? Hint: Joey Beltram's Roland synth has something to do with it. Curious about how to craft the wobbly, ethereal, chorus-y guitar sound on Cocteau Twins' "Cherry-Coloured Funk"? Spent days trying to figure out how Mala got his bass so deep on all the those pioneering dubstep records? Yeah, we got those tips, too, and plenty more.

But that's to say nothing of this issue's cover star, Kieran Hebden (a.k.a. Four Tet), who's been carving out his own niche in electro-acoustic music over the past 14 years. Generally around November, we make the firm decision to steer clear of any tired-seeming year-end "best of" discussions, yet we couldn't help but give Four Tet's *There Is Love in You* a second look—and tell you that it's definitely one of the year's best albums. Ali Gitlow caught Hebden prepping for his big US tour—which, by the time you read this, will have long been over—and she gathered intel on how his music-making trajectory has changed course, and how London club Plastic People has been such an influential force in how he goes about making records.

The iconic sound theme wasn't just reserved for the elder statesmen of the scene. The artists who appear in this issue's Audiophile section also make some of the most forward-thinking sounds we've picked up on all year. Whether it's the chilly-but-warm, blissed-out vibe of Christopher Greenspan's oOoO project, Buenos Aires cumbia purveyor Chancha Via Circuito, or the jazz- and electro-infused compositions of Oriol, there's no doubt that today's underclassmen producers are generating fresh, twisted vibes from what came before them.

It's no stretch to say that every issue of *XLR8R* is packed with iconic sounds. But with this one, we dig waaaay deep—even Vis-Ed featured photographer Grant Willing explores the out-there world of Scandinavian black metal with his *Svart Metall* series—and hope, as with every music-tech issue, that it'll inspire the next generation of icons to come.

—Ken Taylor, Editor

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Four Tet, shot in Los Angeles by JUCO

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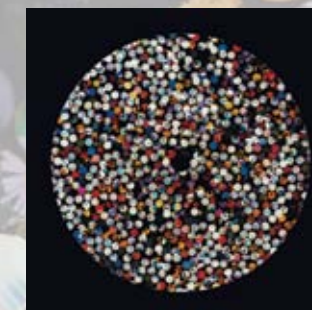
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RIP EMPSON



Rip Empson wasn't sure whether he should be a professional athlete or a bean farmer, so he split the difference and became a writer. He lives in the Bay Area, has a Twitter account, and contributes to The Huffington Post, TechCrunch, and other pubs. He just quit smoking for the seventh time, but he's definitely not a quitter—he's here to win. Rip wrote this issue's Audiofile on Buenos Aires' Chancha Via Circuito.

JAKE GUIDRY



Writer Jake Guidry is a St. Louis-bred resident of Chicago who uses most of his time scouring worlds both physical and digital for music. When he isn't scouring, he's at the clubs and venues playing said music. Though his tastes are rather fluid, he'll always stand by his convictions that Radiohead's *Kid A* and *Burial's Untrue* are the two best albums of all time. He penned this issue's Oriol feature.

GLENN JACKSON



A recent addition to the *XLR8R* staff, editorial intern Glenn Jackson was fascinated with sounds, buttons, and knobs from an early age. So when the time came to spend his first paycheck from his high school job, it was only natural that he bought a synthesizer. Since then, the limitless array of sounds and textures that make up electronic music have only continued this fascination and have led him to find new ways to share it as a Bay Area-based writer, musician, and producer.

STEFAN NICKUM



A new transplant to the Bay Area, Stefan Nickum is a writer, DJ, and editorial intern at *XLR8R*. Stefan DJs as The Crooked Clef, and his mixes have been written about in the *New Yorker* online, the *Atlantic* online, and *The Stranger*. He also helps run a music blog called *Trash Menagerie*, where he has spent the last three years writing about various strains of club music. Current interests include: world music 2.g, Afro-futurism, living love, ghettotikitech, and the supernatural powers of bass.

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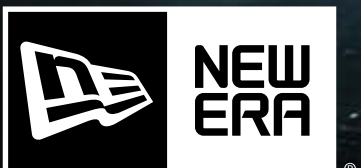


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PODCAST



PODCAST: GRIME TIME WITH ELIJAH & SKILLIAM AND TERROR DANJAH.

The podcast madness never stops at *XLR8R* HQ. This month, grab a set from Rinse faves and young guns Elijah & Skilliam, who've been taking the grime world by storm with their uncompromising mixes, not to mention their Butterz label. Then the daddy of grime himself, Terror Danjah, also steps in to ply us with a set of London anthems-to-be. He's been releasing killer after killer via Sendspace and Twitter, so you can bet that his exclusive mix for us is gonna be full of unreleased tunes.

Get your dose of can't-miss hotness and sign up for our weekly podcast at XLR8R.com, where we feature exclusive mixes from all across the spectrum, including new sets from Teengirl Fantasy, Poirier, Matthewdavid, Maddslinky, and tons more.

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XLR8R'S "SOUNDS OF TOMORROW" CONTEST

WIN A MESS OF NEW TUNES AND MORE IF YOU CAN TELL US THE FUTURE!

Along with slipping a few of our year-end favorites into this issue, we've dedicated many of these pages to innovative, iconic artists who've created their own distinctive styles—aesthetics that continue to set them apart from any music that came before them. Many of those iconic sounds have built the foundations for the genres we know and love today, but what's coming next? We'd like you to tell us what you think the up-and-coming tunesmiths of today will do for the sound of tomorrow. To win this issue's contest, give us your projection of what the next-level jams we'll be hearing in 2020 will sound like, in 200 words or less.

The most interesting musical fortune tellings will score a copy of *Svart Metall*, a photo book by Grant Willing which explores a whole other kind of iconic sound, black metal. We'll also throw in a grab bag

of brand-new, smokin'-hot albums from the folks within this issue of *XLR8R*, such as Terror Danjah (Hyperdub), Teengirl Fantasy (True Panther), Oriol (Planet Mu), and our cover star Four Tet (Domino). This bevy of brilliant music from 2010 will make a fine addition to any savvy soothsayer's record collection, so tap into your crystal balls and tell us what's in the cards for the next decade of musical exploration.

One grand-prize winner will receive: a copy of Grant Willing's *Svart Metall*, and each of the CDs listed above.

Four runners up winners will receive: a copy of each of the CDs listed above.



NOV/DEC NO.136

Music and videos from oOo00, Oriol, Nguzunguzu, and more

Friends With You's Miami City Guide on *XLR8R* TV

Exclusive *XLR8R* podcasts from Moby and Teengirl Fantasy

An extended interview with Einstürzende Neubauten

Stream Four Tet's MELT! Festival set

Exclusive content from the Ninja Tune XX celebrations

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SEPT/OCT NO.135

Music and videos from Salem, Arp, Altered Natives, and more

Scottie B's Baltimore City Guide on *XLR8R* TV

El Guincho, Lazer Sword on *XLR8R* TV

An Outbox with Chapterhouse

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NGUZUNGUZU



AN LA-BY-WAY-OF-CHICAGO DUO WARDS OFF EVIL SPIRITS WITH A WORLDLY MUSICAL SENSIBILITY AND A HARD-TO-PRONOUNCE NAME.

When collaborative music is based on more than just a web of common musical interests, it's likely that something special will spawn from the individuals involved. Maybe it's a shared love for cats, weird computer animations, or Nikola Tesla, but the studio isn't the only inspiration for Los Angeles-based Daniel Pineda (a.k.a. DJ Na) and Asma Maroof (a.k.a. DJ Fantasma), who create cosmic anthems for nightclubs and living rooms under the name Nguzunguzu.

The tongue-twisting moniker, borrowed from carvings placed on the prows of canoes to warn off water spirits in the Solomon Islands, is something that fans of globetrotting house have learned to pronounce in the last year, and it serves as a fitting title for the pair's unusual musical personality. "It makes us think of a rhythmic sound," says Pineda. "It looks like a pattern, and sometimes we think about this thing floating in the ocean navigating around and between islands." Though they were both born in Maryland, Pineda and Maroof met while at school in Chicago, and bonded over cumbia, kuduro, reggaeton, R&B, Baltimore club, and house music—in addition to those aforementioned not-so-musical loves.

They began experimenting with sound in a variety of settings, improvising with drum machines and keyboards, and usually recording on cassette. A CD-R of 30 tracks made the rounds, landing in the hands of a few like-minded producers, including future collaborator Kingdom. After completing their studies, they relocated to Los Angeles and continued to develop their sound, spinning at house parties, art galleries, fashion shows, and film screenings. Along with fellow DJ Total Freedom, their now-defunct Tuesday-night Wildness party, at the famous queer/transgender Silver Platter bar, created dialog between communities using performance, art, and music, taking in touring DJs and influencing others with similar aims of running progressive residencies.

Their body of work is a twisted knot of internet links to numerous off-the-wall mixes, 3D-rendered fliers, and a labyrinthine website (wholeareas.com), with a zip file of their self-released, self-titled debut EP embedded inside. The five-track release, soon to be pressed on vinyl by Innovative Leisure, introduced Nguzunguzu to a larger audience with its grim-yet-banging bedroom lullabies ("Caress"), and cumbia at club tempos accompanied by baby jabber ("El Bebe Ambiente"). Their recent second EP, *Mirage*, finds the duo taking a sonic leap forward and tapping further into landscapes of unusual MPC and analog-synth sounds. It's clear that Nguzunguzu isn't about rehashing whatever trends are popping at the moment; countless mixtapes show that their tastes stem from hours of digging through both record stores and social-networking sites—their "Moments in Love" mix, a tribute to the Art of Noise classic, utilizes more than 20 remixes and edits of the track, providing as much proof as one needs to find them guilty of being obsessed with the hunt. They download a ton, and buy a fair number of records and CDs on the street, according to Pineda: "We look anywhere and everywhere for music," he explains.

Lately, Maroof's search has brought her to the stage as M.I.A.'s tour DJ, but rest assured that Nguzunguzu hasn't been relegated to the back burner. Collaborative efforts with colleagues such as Brenmar, Kingdom, and Maluca are being prepped for release, and the duo is overseeing music direction for Wu Tsang's upcoming documentary film, *Damelo Todo*. With such a wide array of things to keep them busy, and plenty more sonic territory to explore, who knows where it's going next. "I'm going to explore the world and new horizons with my vocal chords," says Maroof.

◦ *MIRAGE* IS OUT NOW ON SILVERBACK RECORDINGS. MYSAPCE.COM/NGUZUNGUZU

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CHRISTOPHER GREENSPAN JOINS THE NEW WAVE OF ETHEREAL
ELECTRO-POP MAKERS WHILE SIDESTEPPING THE NAME GAME.



San Francisco producer Christopher Greenspan wants to make sure that people don't mistake his moniker (spelled oOoOO, but simply pronounced "oh") as an intentional act. "Actually, I hate the name," he says, cradling a cup of tea at a local cafe. "It got me grouped in with other obscure, unpronounceable names, which then got me grouped into the 'witch house' genre. In reality, the name came from when I was putting songs on MySpace, and I just put in a bunch of Os."

While Greenspan's ethereal productions may occasionally share heavy, manipulated hip-hop beats and dragging, distorted synths with other so-called witch-house artists, Greenspan tends toward samples and airy vocals to guide his melodies. "What I do is poppy electronica, in my mind," he says. "It's not a clear aesthetic that I was trying to achieve. Some people say they hear songs in their head, whereas for me, it's a lot of

hours of experimentation." For example, with a track like "Mumbai," an Indian-tinged piece from his self-titled debut EP on Tri Angle, "everything started with a drum track, just playing it on a loop and experimenting with synths over it," he explains. "I thought it was almost done, but then I put the vocal sample in, and I think that's the strongest part of the song."

Though this process explains why Greenspan might not be as prolific as his contemporaries, he admits that "there's definitely a lot of pressure to compromise the amount of time and thus the quality of what I'm putting out." While an LP is in the works, it might take more than a year to create nine songs, he reasons. Even in the here and now, Greenspan feels the pressure to keep pumping out remixes: "I've been doing some stuff for major-label artists where there's a clear deadline. They're offering a lot of money, and I can

use the money, but sometimes I'm not feeling it after a couple of weeks, and I have to turn in something I'm not happy with."

While these might seem like the regular growing pains of an emerging producer, it's clear that Greenspan is sincere in his self-imposed demands for quality. "I played in a lot of other peoples' bands for years, but at some point, I just decided to do my own thing," he says. "I like a lot of leftfield electronica along with radio pop music, and I felt like people weren't combining the two in a satisfying way." But with his juxtaposition of gauzy synth work, otherworldly vocal elements, and chunky beats, Greenspan is definitely meeting his own demands, as well as pleasing fans of weird electronic music, no matter what silly name journalists want to give it.

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CHANCHA VIA CIRCUITO

TRAIN-RIDING PEDRO CANALE CRISS-CROSSES BORDERS
TO TAKE CUMBIA BEYOND BUENOS AIRES.



Just as the respiratory sound and motion of the railroad had symbolic importance for early American blues, so too does train travel inform the music of Chancha Via Circuito (a.k.a. Pedro Canale), the young Argentinian producer and musician who, backed by his ZZK crew, is quickly becoming the conductor of cumbia's ongoing expansion beyond traditional Latin audiences.

The railway that connects downtown Buenos Aires to the outskirts can be a dangerous way to travel—the conditions are poor and the cars crowded (the train Canale rides is affectionately nicknamed "La Chancha," or "The Pig")—yet, for Canale, who has commuted to and from the city for 28 years, La Chancha is a real, live character, from which he derives his name, his persona, and his music.

In the same way that rails are conduits for the passage of music and culture between cities, Canale and his ZZK posse (which includes the likes of King Coya, Villa Diamante, Fauna, Douster, El G, and others) are dedicated to integrating a variety of traditional Latin sounds into their digital productions. Their nightclub (backed by ZZK

Records), too, is notorious for its wild parties and as a refuge for digital cumbia and other emerging tropical sounds. It's what originally drew Chancha to Zizek: "It was founded as a place for those looking to dance and get down to hybrid musical genres," he says.

Chancha's first days at Zizek had him working the merch table. Inspired by the sounds he was hearing, and wanting to "make music that people could dance to," he says, Canale quickly began recording and passing tracks to ZZK's management. He was blown away when his debut, *Rodante*, found much critical praise, both in Argentina and beyond.

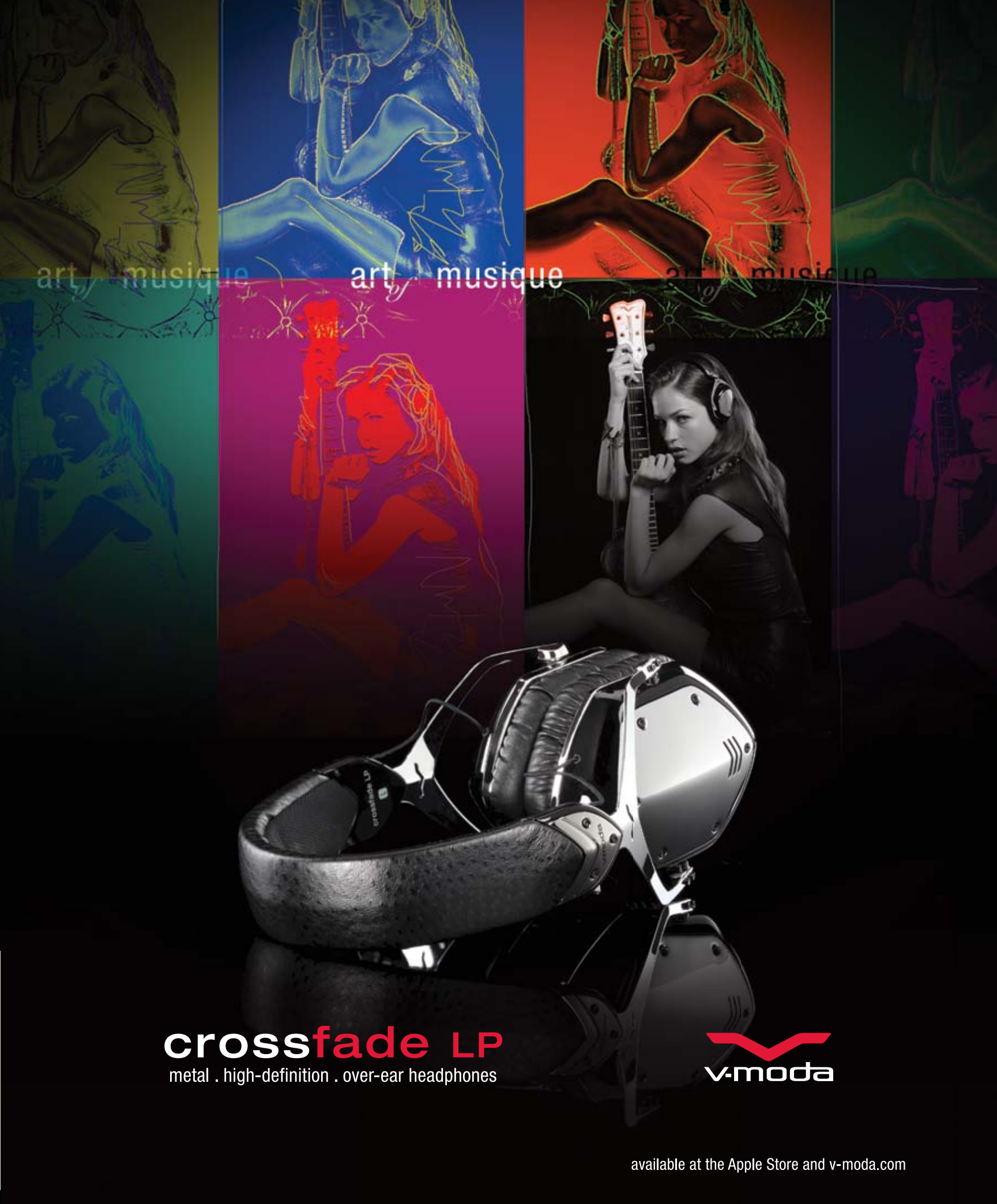
In spite of his success and the growing reach of digital cumbia, Canale remains as humble and laid back as ever—people are often surprised to learn that the unassuming guy working the merchandise table or hanging out by the sound board is also the producer and musician whose cumbia-dub makes them sweaty with dance.

Canale found music early, playing electric bass in elementary-school band before moving to guitar. Shortly thereafter, he was composing songs and immersing himself in multiple projects at once, dabbling in

everything from rock to reggae. It is no surprise, then, that self-recorded acoustic sounds are continually inflecting his synthesized music.

While composing, Canale is always searching, letting images from his day-to-day experience inform his music. *Rio Arriba*, Canale's second album (which dropped earlier this year but has not yet found distribution in the US), naturally takes the shape of a surreal collection of photographs snapped from a train; each song is self-consciously derivative and beautiful, indigenous and licked by dub. His remix of Miriam Garcia & Alicia Solans' "Pintar el Sol," for example, crawls so slowly that the record seems like it's been dipped in syrup. In short, it is Canale's brand of digital cumbia—it lopes and it grooves.

Throughout *Rio Arriba*, these spells of percussion and ambient atmospheric sounds, like the hoot of an owl or the rattling of coins, worm through its bassy underbelly. The name of the album, Canale says, refers to "a trip upstream... in a search for something essential"—an appropriate metaphor for both the man and his neo-primordial music.



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ORIOLO

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Although a quick spin of Oriol's debut LP, *Night and Day*, will likely seduce you into its world of subdued, jazzy, post-breakbeat electro-funk, the London-based producer, known formally as Oriol Singhji, just wants to make a banger for the dancefloor. "I wish I could make a big club tune, but that's not where my head is at most of time," he explains. "I spend more time at home or in the car than in the club, so I guess that affects the way I listen and make music."

Truthfully, a lot more than just his current environment affects the way he made the gorgeous retro-futuristic sounds that comprise *Night and Day*. Born in Barcelona, Oriol moved to London with his parents when he was just a few months old. He grew up in the '90s with drum & bass and the now-classic sounds of Warp and Mo'Wax, cornerstones for his eventual interest in electronic music. "There was a musical culture [in London], and kids knew about it and appreciated it," he says. "I might not have heard it or gotten that

education elsewhere." He later moved to Boston, where he played saxophone at Berklee College of Music for four years. While there, Singhji bought a computer and some gear and started making beats. "Studying music helped me in a lot of ways," he says, "but school is about technique and theory. I think the best thing anyone can do is work on their own thing and try to be creative with it." Oriol learned to filter his musical interests through an academic background, and it shows in the advanced-sounding melodies and structures that make *Night and Day* so unique.

Night and Day, which arrived earlier this year on Planet Mu, is a multi-era journey into '70s soul, '80s electro-funk, and '90s Detroit techno and breakbeat hardcore. Driving-yet-understated beats provide the backbone for lush, reverbed synths accompanied by a healthy dose of soul. Its finished product conjures futuristic hovercraft joy rides along breathtaking cityscapes, like the audio equivalent of

Super Nintendo's *F-Zero*. "You're not gonna forget the sound of all the music you heard as a kid," he says. So if you hear flourishes of Theo Parrish, Domu, Neptunes, or John Coltrane, it's not by accident. "I've probably listened to them more than anyone," he says, "along with Earth, Wind and Fire, Stevie Wonder, [and] Leon Ware."

As the resurgence of electro-funk broadens in scope and popularity, Oriol rises above the rest with laid-back, though highly advanced arrangements. While a club banger may be just out of reach, Oriol's tasteful restraint, and penchant for translating emotion through his music, is perhaps his greatest strength. "I think most of the tracks on the album revolve around a melody," he ponders. "They would sound incomplete without it. I guess that's because the melody is the most emotional aspect for me. [Because] I can't sing and didn't have any vocalists on the record, I tried to make the melodies sing and say something visceral."

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FUNKINEVEN

LONDON'S SOUL-FUNK FUSIONIST HELPS EGLO RECORDS FIND ITS LEGS.



Steven Julien's East London studio is like an analog gear menagerie: vintage Korg, Yamaha, Akai, and Roland synths and drum machines are systematically arranged on desks and racks everywhere. Perched in a swivel chair for our chat, the 31-year-old producer looks sharp in his Keith Haring x Supreme t-shirt, an item issued as a tribute to the late music entrepreneur Malcolm McLaren. Julien has an eye for iconic art and design, as evidenced by his studio equipment, the Vivienne Westwood-copy skull ring on his finger, and the electronic fusion music he makes as FunkinEven.

Julien's 2009 EP, *Kleer*, on Eglo Records, introduced the world to a techy new talent with an old soul. He had been making his own beats for 15 years before meeting Eglo honchos Alexander Nut and Floating Points' Sam Shepherd, but the shy, West London-born Julien had never deemed his music worthy of release, and instead hoarded harddrives full of eclectic beats. His three all-embracing solo singles draw

as much inspiration from 1980s funk acts One Way, Cameo, and, yes, Kleeer, as they do from London broken-beat artists or LA beatmakers. But as much as Julien appreciates the media's comparisons of his work to Dam-Funk, an artist he respects, he's adamant about exploring his own ideas. "All I can do is release my music and kind of shock them a bit," says Julien about the pigeonholing. "[The press] try and put me in a box, but then I release something with acid in it and they're confused."

A closer listen reveals Julien's pleasantly unpredictable offerings. "Heartpound" is fueled by thumping acid-house beats while "Mad Swing" is comprised of drunken drum machines and wobbly synths. The son of Grenadian parents, who bounced between South Acton housing estates and Ealing as a youth, likes surprising people with his "electronic fusion," as he calls his music. He's an avid record collector and former full-time barber who gave up haircuts to make fresh tracks, including music with his

rising-star accomplice Fatima.

The two collaborated on Fatima's single "Soul Glo," a sassy Sa-Ra-styled funk track that earned admiration when it was aired at incubator nightclub Plastic People in London and received strong play from DJs like BBC 1Xtra's Benji B. Eglo's backing has only further cemented his rep. "I'm pretty lucky that I have people them backing my work and believing in my music," he says. "[Eglo] works really well because we're all growing as artists and making an adventure together."

That adventure also includes recent studio collaborations with Detroit house stalwart Kyle Hall, a forthcoming EP, and remixes for Sandra St. Victor, Mark de Clive-Lowe, and Ikonika. He's busy for sure, but clearly doing what he loves, which doesn't include time for Britain's national pastime: "I'm not passionate about football," he says. "I'm just passionate about music. Music is my sport."

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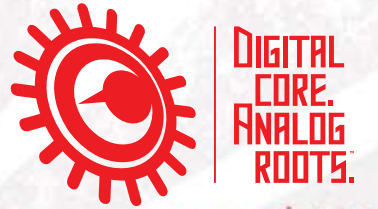
Urban planners will tell you there's a few ways to combat urban sprawl. For Kevin Carney and his wife, Bo, the owners of LA's Mohawk General Store, that means locating themselves next to other like-minded shops and getting people out of their cars and onto their feet. "Los Angeles can be a hard place to have a destination shop," says Carney, who also owns the Generic Man and Generic Surplus clothing and shoe companies. "So we found a

spot where we have great support from our neighbors, like Intelligentsia Coffee, Undeafed, and Cafe Stella. It makes it easier for people to park their cars, or bikes, mopeds, skateboards, whatever, if they know that there is more than one place they can visit and feel like they are in a city other than Los Angeles." The Carneys first opened Mohawk in 2008 in Echo Park, selling their high-end thrifty finds and Generic goods. It went so well

that they're now in a bigger Silver Lake storefront, managing online sales, and incorporating a partner who imports mid-century furniture from Europe. "We are speaking a similar design language as our peers," explains Carney, "which we feel is very important for a local business: to be in touch with their customers' tastes and desires... but we still stick to the mantra of, 'If we would not wear it, then it does not belong in the shop.'" So what does

belong? Along with plenty of vintage stereo equipment, headphones, and accessories, a lot of US-made goods from the likes of Woolrich, Tanner, and Gitman, plus Euro favorites Our Legacy, APC, and Comme des Garçons, to, as Carney says, "keep the shop in balance." *Ken Taylor*

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LABELS WE LOVE

HONEST JON'S

A PORTOBELLO ROAD HIPSTER HAVEN'S IN-HOUSE LABEL HAS ITS BEST YEAR YET.



Whenever brick-and-mortar record shops resemble endangered, tusk-less elephants displayed in zoo cages for hipsters and mourners to feed handfuls of peanuts to every National Record Store Day, and whenever indie labels seem to be nothing more than cute names attached to stolen downloads, Honest Jon's is there to smack one upside the head. For nearly a decade, the record shop on West London's Portobello Road and its record label led by Blur/Gorillaz frontman Damon Albarn have unearthed criminally unheard music from across Africa, the Middle East, and their fair city's own post-war immigrant history. This year was no exception. South African electro-funk caught many Western ears when Honest Jon's released the groundbreaking *Shangaan Electro* compilation this past summer. The Shangaan vibe takes no cues from Planet Rock but rather twitches about

to simple, sped-up MIDI synth beats that drive caffeinated vocals as best heard on Zinja Hlungwani's "N'wagezani My Love." The label's embrace of the vintage and the futuristic shined bright when Berliner Torsten Profrock (a.k.a. T++) had samples of 1930s East African singer Ssekinomu's vocals haunt distorted, night-stalking techno breakbeats on his *Wireless* record. If fourth-world music indeed exists, Honest Jon's wrote the book on it.

"I think [Honest Jon's] is one of the most interesting labels," says Moritz Von Oswald, co-founder of iconic Berlin dub-techno imprints Basic Channel and Rhythm & Sound. "[They're] supporting something that's not supported at all." Von Oswald connected with the label through his friend and Honest Jon's co-founder Mark Ainley, and earlier this year, the imprint released an EP and a live album by Oswald's abstract

dub project, the Moritz Von Oswald Trio (featuring Vladislav Delay and Sun Electric's Max Loderbauer). On the *Vertical Ascent* EP, the trio builds headphone dub for 1 a.m. strolls through streets fogged by steaming gutters where clanging metal percussion hits and swooning, gaseous synth drones all thicken the air. House and techno legends François Kevorkian and Carl Craig later mixed the Trio's improvised jams into fine bloodstream flows for *Live In New York*. "What [Honest Jon's] does for different people regarding music, I think, is amazing and admirable," he reflects.

Such thoughts about how the label covers "different people" brings to mind a peculiar record that Honest Jon's released this year between reissues of early 20th century Turkish folk and '50s Latin-Congolese pop. Darren "Actress" Cunningham unleashed *Splazsh*, a welcome throwback to post-

techno's glory days in the early '00s when artists threw ideas, breakbeats, and sampled vocals against walls and Scotch-taped their shattered pieces into grooves both genuinely psychedelic and freakish. Tracks like "Always Human" and "Senorita" are vintage micro-house while Cunningham indulges in grimy, hungover 8-bit funk on "Maze" and "Bubble Butts and Equations." Yet, in the Honest Jon's universe, such sounds still make comfy connections with the generational traditions and third-world grace in the label's catalog. Cunningham kept his words simple for Honest Jon's: "Good people with a strong passion for challenging music with a heart placed in the community." Cameron Macdonald

Martina Topley-Bird's *Some Place Simple* is Honest Jon's newest LP release. honestjons.com

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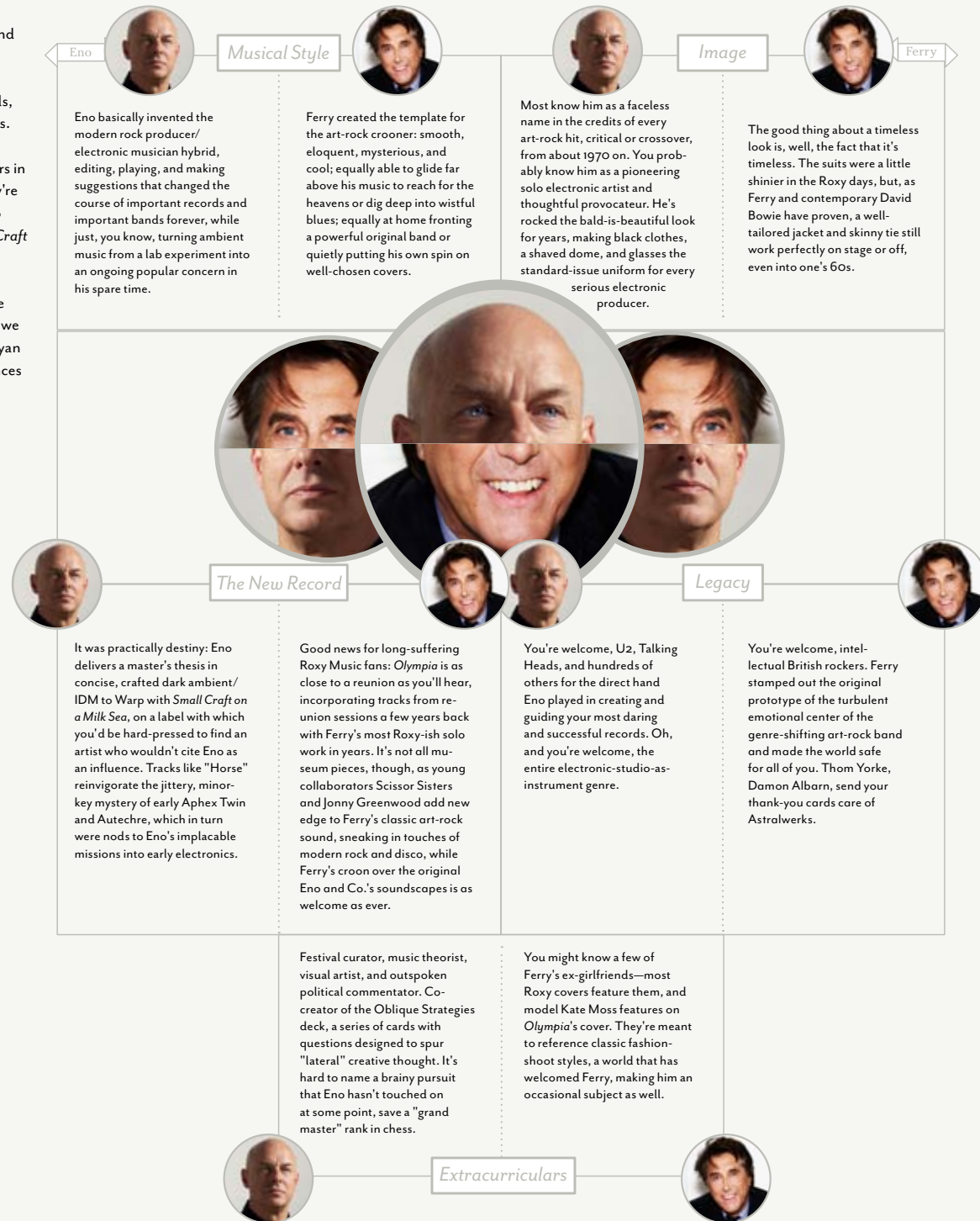


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THE LIFE OF BRI/YAN

THE ART-ROCK ICONS AND ROXY MUSIC FOUNDERS GO HEAD TO HEAD WITH NEW ALBUMS ON THE HORIZON.

They started together in Roxy Music, the legendary art-rock band that featured Bryan Ferry on vocals and Brian Eno on tape reels, keyboards, and effects. They've pursued solo careers across the years in parallel, and now they're dropping parallel solo records (Eno's *Small Craft on a Milk Sea* [Warp] and Ferry's *Olympia* [Astralwerks]) that are as vital as ever. Below we examine the Brian/Bryan parallels and divergences since their mid-'70s heyday. *Rob Geary*



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Compiled by Andrew Porter



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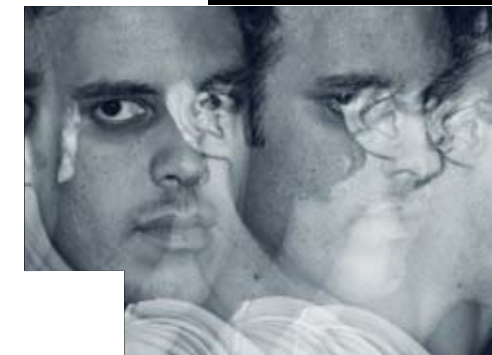
IMPOSSIBLE

STUCK IN THE MACHINE, **FOUR TET'S** KIERAN HEBDEN
DELIVERED ONE OF 2010'S BEST WITH *THERE IS LOVE IN YOU.*

Words: ALI GITLOW Photos: JUCO



OVER THE PAST 12 YEARS, LONDONER
KIERAN HEBDEN (BETTER KNOWN AS
FOUR TET)
HAS FORGED AN IMPRESSIVE
CAREER CRAFTING MUSIC
THAT



IS THOROUGHLY MODERN YET
SOMEHOW TIMELESS,
EXPERTLY MASHING HIP-HOP,
JAZZ, FOLK, TECHNO, AND
HOUSE
IN A THOUGHTFUL
BLAZE OF ABSTRACTION.

His highly acclaimed *There Is Love in You* LP, released this past January, is pitch-perfect listening for many situations: when it's raining in the dead of winter and the city feels like it's caving in on you; when your friends decide to smoke weed and watch the Discovery Channel with the sound off, giggling wildly; when you're on a plane leaving behind someone you love who lives in another country. It's what robots will listen to, once they learn how to feel. It's a top-notch soundtrack for moments of introspection or joyful abandon and, sometimes, for dancing your fucking ass off.

As a teenager growing up in South London during the mid-'90s, Hebden attended Elliott School in Putney, where he counted Burial and the guys

of Hot Chip amongst his peers. The first record he ever bought with his own money was the 7" single of Tears for Fears' "Shout"; the first shows he attended without parental chaperones were American grunge and noise-rock acts like Mudhoney, Sonic Youth, and Helmet. The London drum & bass scene was kicking into motion at the same time, and Hebden started picking up releases by producers like Photek on Goldie's Metalheadz label. "We had a little café at school and there was a stereo there. People would play whatever music they wanted every day. It'd just be tapes of pirate radio from the night before. So that music was the sound of school, and the sound of every party you went to," he describes



on the phone from his home in North London.

In 1996 he and schoolmates Adem Ilhan and Sam Jeffers formed post-rock outfit Fridge, quickly releasing their first two LPs, *CeeFax* (1997) and *Semaphore* (1998), on Trevor Jackson's now-defunct Output Recordings. Initially, Hebden played guitar for the band, but soon began to pick up other instruments (especially the sampler), adding flourishes to their sound. "DJ Shadow's [*Endroducing.....*] had just come out," he muses. "I'd been listening to a lot of hip-hop, and the concept that you could have four loops and two different drum beats and melodies and sample all these different records and put them together—it was such an obvious and simple idea. But somehow when DJ Shadow put that record out, it was a bit like, 'Ah... This is something that can be done.'"

Soon after, Hebden created a track entirely on his own, "Thirtysixtwentyfive," named as such because of its length. The air of *Endroducing.....* is definitely present; it begins with a stuttering downtempo beat doused with bits of bare, rising-and-falling rubbery horns, and twinkling chimes. About halfway through, a distinct, hard drum kicks in, seeming almost like a proto-dubstep tune, with some melancholy guitar strumming eventually added on top. Then the sound drops out completely, and a laughing female voice repeats "with buzzing stereo noises" a number of times before coming to a close with an old-timey flute-and-piano combo. He played this for Jackson, who decided to release it on Output as well. "I was thinking of names, and at the time I was buying all these European free jazz records," he recalls, "so the record was called Four Tet, like quartet, because I thought it was the sort of thing I might see on one of these weird European records I was buying." And thus, Four Tet was born.

When the 12" of "Thirtysixtwentyfive" was released, Hebden was in college studying computer science and math, but soon dropped out. "I'd be at home sitting in my pajamas working on a remix, and going to a lecture about an operating system couldn't compete," he reveals, chuckling. While he had dance tunes on heavy rotation and was beginning to dabble in the genre with his own productions, Hebden was not actually going out to raves or clubs. His first visits to London's nightspots, in fact, were some of his first DJ gigs. "The first time I DJed, I'd never even touched two turntables and a mixer before," he admits.

Fridge's output began to slow, and the Four Tet project took off. Over the next few years, Hebden released *Dialogue* (Output, 1999), *Pause* (Domino, 2001), *Rounds* (Domino, 2003, which reached #60 on the UK charts), and *Everything Ecstatic* (Domino, 2005). These records—especially *Pause*—saw Hebden honing his signature sound, which was quickly dubbed "folktronica," implying the confluence of sampled folk instruments and electronic beats. "The thing I've done to death, when I did all the stuff endlessly sampling harps, acoustic instruments, and mandolins...the whole folktronica thing happened, and you get a bit trapped going down one path," he laments. "I imagine sometimes when I'm working on stuff, I am trying to rebel against things I've done in the past."

‘USING THOSE
LITTLE
BITS OF SOUND
IS LIKE
TAKING
A PICTURE.

IT'S NICE
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SO
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One way Hebden subverted this was to team up with recently deceased, legendary jazz drummer Steve Reid for a pair of recordings called *The Exchange Session Volumes 1&2* (Domino, 2006), followed by a smattering of tour dates together across the globe. Recorded over the course of one day, these albums showcase the guys' improvisational abilities by pairing Hebden's quirky electronic soundscapes with Reid's avant-garde drum hits. His most recent attempt to rebel against his folktronic days is *There Is Love in You*, which takes up where his 2008 *Ringer* EP left off—exploring house and techno influences in a more straightforward way than any of his previous releases. "Once you've put a lot of records out, to put something else out, you've got to feel like there's a point to it," he asserts. "I spent time making sure I had something that was definitely different from stuff I'd done before."

In late 2008, Hebden began a residency at East London club Plastic People, which, over the course of a year, would become his de facto laboratory for cooking up tracks. To electronic music geeks, the place is a modern legend: Attendees descend a flight of stairs and enter a small, almost pitch-black room with massive Funktion One speakers producing crystal-clear sound; the DJ is barely visible, with only a small lamp to guide the way. "This is the sort of club where you can play an Art Blakey jazz record at 2 a.m., peak time, following a jungle record, and everyone will go mental," he says affectionately. "It totally informed what I was doing with the record in a

big way, because then, when I came back to working on tracks, it was always in the back of my mind like, 'I wonder what this is going to sound like at Plastic People; maybe this one will really work there.'

Hebden says "Love Cry," the second song on *There Is Love in You*, was the first one he tested out and completed—it *did* really work there. He describes it as the clubbiest track on the record. Indeed, what begins as blippy, lo-fi fuzz and sporadic synths soon turns into a thoroughly danceable beat with high-pitched female vocals echoing on repeat.

When playing the track out live that was ultimately named after the venue, "Plastic People," Hebden noticed the drums seemed slow and blurry when heard loudly through the soundsystem. "I had to come back home and rework all the timing of them," he explains. "Sometimes you play something loud and realize that the sub-bass has got a kind of rhythm to it, and if that's not sitting tightly with everything else that's going on, the track can suddenly feel lethargic when it's not supposed to." Listening to the tune with full knowledge of the circumstances of its construction, "Plastic People" feels, appropriately, like a paean to the dancefloor in all its grotty, euphoric glory. Solemn bells and a sparse four-to-the-floor flirt with a wonky handclap before a shaky, maraca-like beat kicks in, evoking that afterhours moment when your body wearily tries to keep up with your brain, which is busy focusing on the sounds emanating from the speakers.

The first track on the album, "Angel Echoes," rather simply pairs a beat, bells, and a chillingly glitched-out female vocal sample that, though it's impossible to tell what the woman in question is saying, is most definitely yearning for... something. "Sing" is perhaps the most upbeat song on offer, serving up choppy 8-bit bleeps atop a quick-paced four-four and adding a softly crooned (and gorgeous) vocal snippet along the way; closing track "She Just Likes to Fight" is structured around a basic guitar melody and gives off an air of pensive sweetness.

Anticipation for *There Is Love in You's* release had been building, since it was to be the first straight-up Four Tet full-length effort to come out in five years. It climbed to #35 on the UK charts and #157 on the US charts, and garnered massive praise from the music press, both alternative and mainstream. *The Guardian* claimed that Hebden had "mastered the art of the smooth musical and emotional gear change," while Pitchfork called it his most focused album to date. "I've had a really good year with that record," he affirms. While most producers with lasting music careers might choose otherwise, Hebden keeps his production set-up simple, eschewing a fancy home studio for a PC hooked up to a hi-fi. If he ever needs large amounts of gear or a complex set-up, he rents a studio for a period of time. "If I have lots of equipment, I spend loads of time messing around with it and plugging it in rather than actually making music," he says.

He played and sampled bits of his own electric guitar and borrowed a keyboard from a friend for *There Is Love in You*, but is quick to note that Four Tet is all about constructing sounds through a computer.

"It is aggressively digital music, basically," he stresses. "Everything is samples to me. Even if I just play a bit of guitar, and record some bits into the computer and then use it like I would use samples of something else. There's never any live performance of any sort on the records. I'm totally not interested in that at all with the Four Tet project. Everything you hear is essentially humanly impossible a lot of the time."

What often gives Four Tet material its undeniably human, emotive quality is Hebden's use of nontraditional and highly personal samples, whether it's a rubber duck squeaking on "Slow Jam" off of *Rounds*, environmental noises from a sound check for a gig outside Mount Fuji on "Fuji Check" from *Everything Ecstatic*, or his friends' unborn child's heartbeat, which comprises the 12-second track "Pablo's Heart" from *There Is Love in You*. "Using those little bits of sound like that is like taking a picture," he describes. "It's nice to just have it kept and preserved there so I can remember it nice and easily."

In July, *Angel Echoes Remix* was released on Domino, containing re-works of "Angel Echoes," "Love Cry," and "Sing" from folks including Roska, Floating Points, Jon Hopkins, and Hebden's long-time friend Dan Snaith (a.k.a. Caribou). While he's reluctant to play favorites, he says Joy Orbison's take on "Love Cry" particularly excited him. "It's just a drumbeat and a bit of vocals," he offers. "He managed to take the sounds I used and make it sound like him, but make it sound like my track at the same time."

On the heels of *There Is Love in You*, Hebden is finishing some touring for the record, and has taken up his old residency at Plastic People, which the local Hackney Council threatened to close earlier this year

(following claims that the club's dank, underground feel made it seem like a drug den), will in fact remain open. He's also trying to find time to spend at home playing tunes to his baby daughter, Tallulah, born this summer. "Anything really screechy or gnarly seems to bother her," he says lovingly. "Anything with a rolling rhythm she seems to be quite at ease with."

When asked to reflect on his musical career up to this point, Hebden notes that, for him, there is a direct journey from the early Fridge records he helped realize, to Four Tet, to his collaborations with the late jazz drummer Steve Reid, up through his most recent record and extensive remix work. "I like the fact that I can see all the records I've made sitting on a shelf together, and that's like my musical life mapped out," he articulates. "All I know is that next year, I'm going to make new music. And that at the moment, I don't have a clue what it's gonna be. I like that feeling a lot. It's nice to have the space to be ready to embrace something really different."

[There Is Love in You](https://www.domino.com/myspace.com/fourtetkieranhebden) is out now on Domino. [myspace.com/fourtetkieranhebden](https://www.domino.com/myspace.com/fourtetkieranhebden)



[Listen to Four Tet's MELTI Festival set at XLR8R.com/136extras.](https://www.xlr8r.com/136extras)

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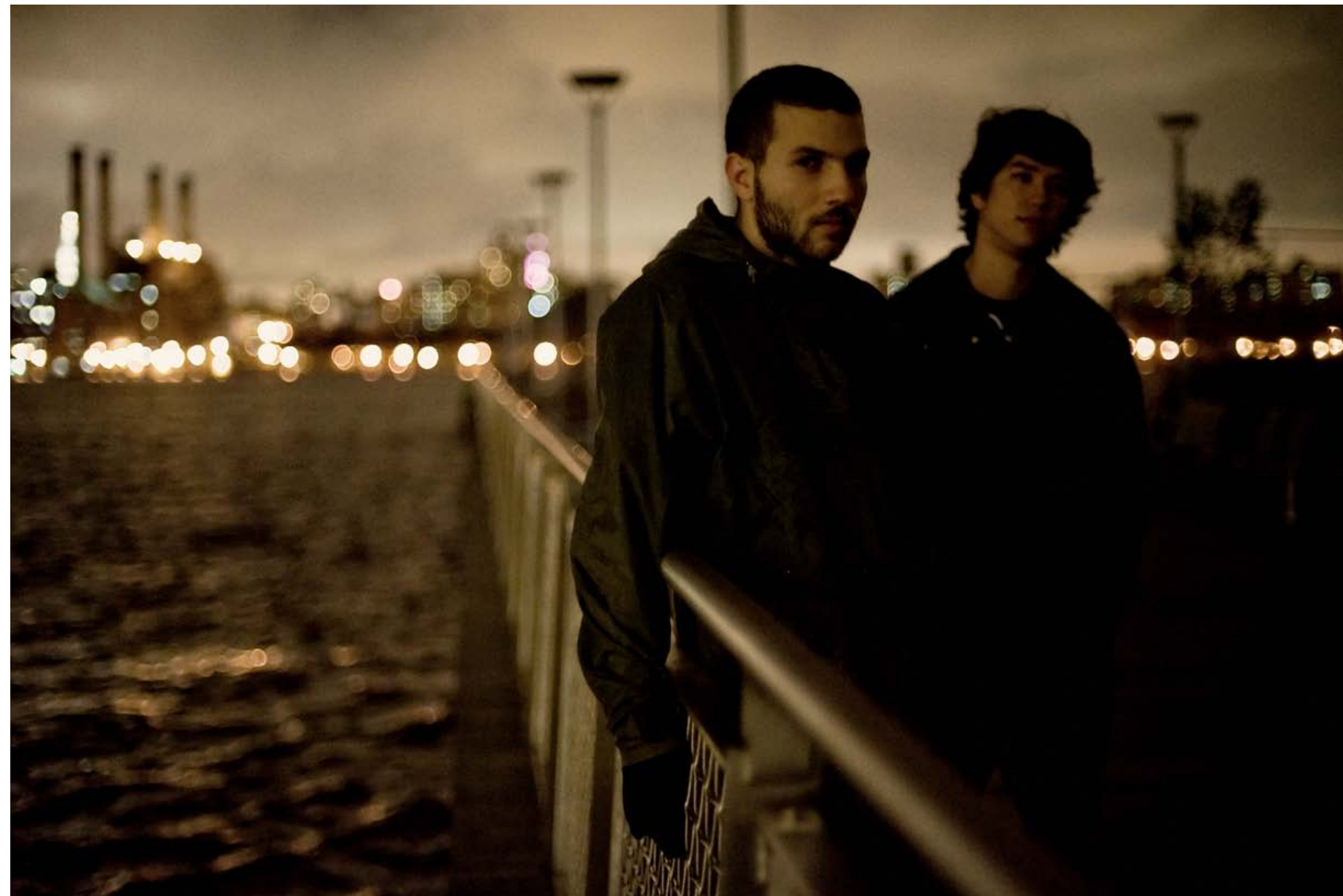
S I O

J A M 7

WITH THEIR DEBUT ALBUM, OBERLIN UNDERGRADS TEENGIRL FANTASY
MAKE HOUSE-INFUSED R&B FOR DREAMERS

Words: MICHAEL HARKIN Photos: SHAWN BRACKBILL

IF [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] THEY
WANTED TO, [REDACTED]
TEENGIRL [REDACTED]
FANTASY [REDACTED]
COULD CRANK
OUT 4/4 [REDACTED]
CLUB [REDACTED]
BANGERS [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] BETTER
[REDACTED] THAN
[REDACTED] ANYONE
[REDACTED] ELSE.



Everyone in Ibiza would be humming their tunes at poolside bars, their whimsical name the toast of the town. But that would be too easy, and untrue to the chemistry of the project. The duo's psychedelic, highly nuanced dynamic, palpable in everything they release, makes for some of the most personal, original, and exhilarating sounds around right now.

When I speak with the duo of Nick Weiss and Logan Takahashi over the phone, they're back at Oberlin College, about 40 miles outside of Cleveland, Ohio, where they're in their final year as undergraduates. They had recently returned for their first week back at school after the summer holiday, having just played to their largest crowd yet opening for Panda Bear on Governors Island in New York the weekend before.

Considering how much touring they've already done (they played in Eastern Asia and China earlier in the year, and have gigged across Europe and the USA), it's remarkable that their studies haven't been derailed at some point in the last three years. "In some

ways, [school] has been frustrating, but in some ways, it's cool to have something grounding us rather than just playing shows," explains Weiss. Takahashi studies in a program called TIMARA (Technology in Music and Related Arts), so all of this could, one hopes, be considered fieldwork.

Takahashi and Weiss met three years

ago, on their second day of college. Within a week they were jamming together. "We were writing our first song so we could play this party at our school," explains Weiss, "and we put the songs on MySpace just to show people. We only had two friends on there." One of their those early friends was 20 Jazz Funk Greats, the esteemed music blog of Tri Angle Records

head Robin Carolan, where one of their songs got posted and earned them attention from well beyond their immediate peers.

While incorporating tropes from danceable, bygone eras in pop, R&B, and club sounds, the Teengirl sound rarely coalesces into straight-up club tracks—their narcotic, mercurial jams, tinged with Krautrock and 4AD pop sensibilities, are usually better suited to the home-listening realm. Their sound seems as influenced by Manuel Göttsching as it is by, say, Mariah Carey, whose "Touch My Body" they deconstructed into delirious abstraction.

These styles that they're reimagining and recontextualizing have been



"MY MOM USED
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CLASS



AT GOLD'S GYM,

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FOR HER...

I WAS 11."

— NICK WEISS

coursing through their veins from a very young age. "My mom used to take hip-hop dance class at Gold's Gym in LA," explains Weiss, "and she met this woman who was looking for an R&B DJ, and I produced some tracks for her... I was 11, I think, and had just started making tracks on ACID Pro and other programs. I got a keyboard and started composing with its internal sequencer. She had some songs written and we worked together to do some ballads as well as uptempo stuff."

The two profess a love for the dark, overlooked corners of the R&B genre. "TLC was one of my favorite bands," explains Weiss, "and I got really into Blaque, one of their protégé bands that didn't really end up panning out." The fan site he created for them (sadly now offline) had much the same sparkly, animated-GIF aesthetic of Teengirl's Angelfire website, the dated look of which is mirrored in the artwork of their previous EP releases and *7AM*, the duo's debut LP.

The process of writing and recording *7AM* began in Takahashi's parents' basement in New Jersey back in 2009. "We write most of the songs by jamming, and shape them by playing them out live," says Takahashi, who explains that both of them are generally writing and performing with synths, including a MicroKORG and a Korg Poly-800, as well as drum pads and a 404 sampler. In the studio, they keep overdubs to a minimum—there is "polishing" on the computer but, as Weiss points out, "there are a lot of unedited live takes in there."

In rather clever fashion, they were able to use a four-month study abroad trip to Amsterdam for both academic and music-making endeavors. Working in a studio at their Amsterdam school, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, they mixed a large chunk of their record. Their overseas presence also afforded them opportunities to play all around the UK and Europe, including a Bucharest gig with Andrew Weatherall and an unbelievably stacked UK bill with Joy Orbison, The Bug, Cooly G, and Gold Panda.

Along with the obvious steps up in production and mixing quality, *7AM* provides a sustained and ecstatic high, as different as the individual tracks turn out to be. It's unrepentantly eccentric, and mostly instrumental, its hooks gradually sinking in and holding on with an affectionate yet firm grip, especially on the vocal tracks.

"We wanted there to be one or two tracks that had a really direct influence, that weren't as abstract," explains Takahashi of the record's more immediately accessible tunes. "We wanted the

vocal tracks to have a real sensibility, no matter how weird the instrumentation is." Of these tracks, they seem especially excited about their collaboration with singer Shannon Funchess of Light Asylum, who features on "Dancing in Slow Motion." Produced during the final recording push earlier this year, this track marked Weiss and Takahashi's first time collaborating with someone else in the studio. The sound was influenced largely, they say, by The-Dream, whose productions they both deeply admire.

"We wrote it then and there with a bunch of really amazing synths that belong to our friend Tom Arsenault, and wrote the vocal part collaboratively," recounts Weiss. "We would throw stuff out at her, and she would kind of sing it back to us in her voice, in her range." The result is a slow-burning R&B ballad as genuinely moving as the songs that have inspired them.

Their use of vocals is equally deft on "Cheaters," *7AM*'s lead single, which samples Love Committee's "Cheaters Never Win" to create the truest club single on the record. An ecstatic vocal house throwback, it is all the more powerful among its cerebral surroundings. Even at their tightest, Teengirl's songs still have a loose, incidental quality to them, making the moments of ecstatic release all the more thrilling. When the synths and drums reach their melodic peak a minute and a half into "In an Area," the second track on *7AM*, the Teengirl sensibility, which may at first seem scattershot, really begins to click.

Their versatility is clear, not only from the range of their own material, but also in Weiss' non-Teengirl collaborations with two stellar San Francisco-based singers. The handful of tracks he's done for H.U.N.X. (a.k.a. Seth Bogart of pop groups Hunx & His Punx and Gravy Train!!!) are poppy, homoerotic house jams. Unlike Teengirl, says Weiss, this collaboration is "not as much about the instrumentation as about having the pop diva/singer right in front." Just as compelling are the tracks Weiss has produced for singer Alexis Penney, who operates in a more moody, Arthur Russell-esque mode, heartbreaking and wholly infectious.

Teengirl Fantasy's future activities aren't set in stone by any means, but it's clear that Weiss and Takahashi want to keep jamming and expanding their palette. Alluding to a remix they had just completed for Delorean, Weiss says, "It has a freestyle vibe to it... kind of an '80s freestyle ballad, a *So So Def Bass All-Stars* sound." Whether or not that's the direction that the duo is headed in, the Teengirl party bus is one it would be wise to score tickets for.

7AM is out now on True Panther Sounds.
teengirlfantasy.angelfire.com

Check out Teengirl Fantasy's exclusive podcast at XLR8R.com/1316extras.

T H E

D E V I L

I N S I D E

TERROR DANJAH TALKS GREMLINS, RHYTHM 'N' GRIME, & NEARLY THROWING IN THE TOWEL.

W o r d s : A N D R E W R Y C E / P h o t o s : B E N R A Y N E R



WHEN
YOU HAVE
A
NAME LIKE
TERROR DANJAH,

"in bed" seems like a weird place to conduct an interview. Of course, it's midnight in his native London, and despite his aggressive handle, his personality is more than affable, even at this hour, as he asks me if his TV is too loud in the background. These days, the early-30-something producer, who, at least at this point, hasn't made his birth name known to the press, isn't having too much trouble being heard.

Over the past decade, Terror Danjah has developed a consistent, instantly identifiable style. His songs—funky, melodic, full of neon synths, hyperactive clacking drums, and cartoonish effects—are hardly a bunch of grungy beats for MCs to scream over. But the most recognizable element of his production is what gave his last album, *Gremlinz*, its name. "People think it's me," he says emphatically

of the 'gremlin,' the unforgettable cackle that hides in most of his tracks. "It's not—it's a sample from a jungle [sound] pack. People started to like it, then I took it out because I was bored of it, and people were like, 'Where's that laughing thing? That's so you, so your personality.'"



Terror grew up on a steady diet of Michael Jackson, Herbie Hancock, Salt N Pepa, "the soul revival thing," he says. "And so much Mary J Blige," but it was playing jungle that got him started in the production game, and its fidgety percussion is a trademark of the tracks he makes now. "What made jungle special was the way the percussions and the hats glided into their own pockets," he reminisces, with a hint

of sentimentality. In the early 2000s, he and his cohorts would eventually birth grime, the genre in which he's now considered legendary. "I think what happened is that all the guys who couldn't get into garage rolled into grime. Myself, Wiley, the rest of us," he explains.

Working with top vocalists, Terror's role was in the backseat, the master producer providing the distinctively funky and futuristic

grooves beneath the screwfaced scrimmages of MCs like Kano and Bruza. He released several renowned EPs, a couple of scene-spanning all-star compilations, ran his own label (Aftershock), and became an influential force in the burgeoning grime scene, with his productions all over pirate radio airwaves and grime raves in the mid-'00s. "You couldn't get away with hearing a set without hearing at least half Terror Danjah," he boasts.

But he wasn't exactly a star: To him, there was no way out of grime into bigger things, especially considering the genre's propensity to undervalue its producers. So he responded with two oversized hits: "Cock Back," which he calls "theaggiest gun tune ever," and "So Sure," a remarkably relaxed and tender tune sung sweetly by grime chanteuse Sadie Ama; even Kano's verse on the track is gentle.

"So Sure" was such a 180 that it actually heralded a new trend in grime, affectionately known as rhythm'n'grime. "It was a movement," he insists, and a trend that cemented Terror Danjah as a singular artist. With "So Sure," and other similarly minded tracks, Danjah managed to twist his twitchy grime sound into something classy and convincingly sensual. "I just made that music because I love neo-soul and R&B and all that," he explains. It's grime that wasn't necessarily aimed at the dancefloor, but rather for the bedroom, for home-listening, for "Sunday dinner," he suggests. He calls it "Musiq Souldchild on a UK ting," and casually reveals that his next release will be an eight-track affair that revives the style.

Danjah goes as far as to call "So Sure" his favorite track, describing the vocal as "magic." The tune's overtly poppy production—where Terror's violent and frantic riffs were sedated and coaxed into seductively snaking melodies and feminine flourishes initially proved controversial amongst his ultra-masculine peers. "Crazy Titch heard it and he was like, 'Ah, that's crap! You shouldn't do tunes like that!' but then six months later he says, 'I want a tune like that!'" Terror says, laughing. Trepidation quickly gave way to rightful recognition in a big way; even major labels fought it out for the rights to the song, but negotiations fell through and the track was doomed to live out its life as an obscure white-label single, a convenient metaphor for the detrimentally disorganized state of grime music at the time.

Indeed, things started to spiral out of control as grime in general seemed to blunder and jeopardize any commercial potential it had, with notable success stories like Dizzee Rascal eventually moving away from the insular scene. Even post-2004, when times were at their toughest, Terror continued plugging away with Aftershock, but the constant work of managing the label and its artists by himself, with little to no payoff, became too much even for his indomitable spirit. "I was working the hardest I ever have in my life and no one knew I existed," he says. So, in 2008, he got out.

As luck would have it, last year Danjah was tapped by Planet Mu's Mike Paradinas to compile a retrospective of instrumentals, and his star would finally receive the apotheosis it had so long deserved. *Gremlinz*, named after Danjah's distinctive soundbites, gathered tracks made between 2003 and 2009, and rewrote the twin narratives of grime and dubstep with Danjah placed firmly at the center, making

him instantly relevant and, by the time the disc was released, one of the most-talked about producers in the UK. Since then, he's been on a tear, releasing several EPs for free online, and on Planet Mu, Butterz, Rwina, and Hyperdub, with 2010 proving to be one of his most successful years to date.

"It's like I'm a new producer," he says. "I can make an album in two weeks if I really want to, because I'm working like a workhorse. I'm not saying I'm a monster, but I'm a monster. When I made 'Bipolar,' I was on the phone!" After a string of EPs (five to be exact, including an eight-tracker), his incredible year has culminated in the *Undeniable* album on Hyperdub, a confident address on the state of all things Terror. Half vocals and half instrumentals, the album ventures outside of Terror's usual grime, features vocal spots from Bruza, D Double E, and Mz. Bratt, among others, and even includes the eight-minute "S.O.S.," which gradually slows down to a house tempo—something Danjah refers to as a "mindfuck." The album flows wonderfully, no doubt in part because it was assembled by Hyperdub's resident genius Kode9. "It was more like what he would like to hear," says Danjah. "It's what he likes. It made me open up as a different type of producer; most of the tunes on *Undeniable* I probably wouldn't have done if it wasn't for Kode."

The album is just one volley in what has been a triumphant comeback, a year that's seen instrumental grime ever on the rise. "Of course I'm a leader," he says, laughing. He's started a new vinyl label, Hardrive, which already looks promising, lining up releases from himself, DOK, and Joker, and his work rate is as blistering as ever. However, he's stubborn that this isn't some miraculous rejuvenation, but rather a continuation: "People think now I'm consistent. This is not me consistent—this is me having freedom to be me. The last time I was Terror Danjah was the end of 2004. I don't have to look after 26 artists. Now I can look after me."

Undeniable is out now on Hyperdub.
myspace.com/terrordanjah

[Hear a few of Terror Danjah's new tracks at XLR8R.com/i36extras.](https://xlr8r.com/i36extras)

"IT'S LIKE

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NEW PRODUCER.

I CAN MAKE

AN ALBUM

IN TWO WEEKS

IF

I REALLY

WANT TO."



BUILDING AN ICONIC SOUND

IF THERE'S ONE THING THAT WILL
PROBABLY NEVER VACATE THE WORLD OF
ELECTRONIC MUSIC, IT'S THE SCORES OF
IMITATORS READY AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE
TO APE THE LATEST FORWARD-THINKING
CONCEPT AND BLOW IT OUT AND WATER IT
DOWN UNTIL IT BECOMES A LIMP, PLAYED-
OUT, UNFUNNY PUNCHLINE. FRANKLY,
WE'RE SICK OF 'EM. WHICH IS WHY,
FOR THIS MUSIC TECHNOLOGY EDITION,
WE'VE DECIDED TO ASSEMBLE A FEW OF
ELECTRONIC MUSIC'S TRAILBLAZERS TO
TELL US ABOUT WHAT GOES INTO CREATING
A TRULY ICONIC SOUND. FROM DUBSTEP
STALWART MALA'S PUNISHING LOW-END
TO COCTEAU TWINS' HEAVENLY GUITAR
PROCESSING, WE GOT THE STRAIGHT DOPE
ON HOW THESE INNOVATORS CRAFTED THEIR
UNIQUE SONIC SIGNATURES—AND HOW THEY
CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD.

Since he began releasing music via the Warp and Rephlex labels in the mid-'90s, Squarepusher (a.k.a. Tom Jenkinson) has become inextricably linked to a large number of genres—like drum & bass, IDM, electronic-jazz fusion, and gabber, just for starters. Responsible for some of electronic music's canonical records—*Hard Normal Daddy*, *Music Is Rotted One Note*, and *Go Plastic* among them—the UK-based musician/producer/auteur gradually carved a signature sound for himself, only to rethink it with his recent *d'Demonstrator* LP, a jazz-centric collaboration with "a bunch of kids" (his words, not ours) under the moniker Shobaleader One. We called up Jenkinson to see what else has changed. *Patric Fallon*



XLR8R: YOU'VE SAID THAT SHOBALEADER ONE IS THE REALIZATION OF A FANTASY GROUP HINTED AT ON YOUR JUST A SOUVENIR ALBUM. HOW DOES THE SONGWRITING PROCESS WORK AS A BAND SINCE THE WHOLE THING STEMS FROM YOUR IDEAS?

Tom Jenkinson: I wouldn't say it's markedly different. I'm basically making a rough outline of what I want to record prior to anyone arriving, and then playing it to people and seeing what they make of the parts and if they've got suggestions. It's sort of an extension of what I've always done in the past, but instead of me being the sole person that experiments with the parts and tries to modify the way they fit with other parts, I'm actually getting input from other people. The point is that I'm definitely not interested in using musicians as just an extension of a sequencer, where I tell them what to do and they produce a result. I don't really see much point in that because, with a certain amount of effort, you can program a sequencer to sound reasonably like a human being. Sadly or otherwise, you don't necessarily need people on board to convey the impression of music which is made by a human being. So what I'm keen to get from these people is a sense of their own take on the ideas, and hopefully, bit by bit, them bringing their ideas to the table.

WHAT WAS SOME OF THE GEAR USED ON THE *D'DEMONSTRATOR* ALBUM, AS OPPOSED TO YOUR RECENT SOLO RECORDS?

The main difference is the [mixing] console. It's the first time I've used something that [could be described as a] "professional" console. Until recently, I was using the Mackie 24-8 bus, which is a perfectly usable console. I'm now using the Euphonix CS3000

developing the way I used it—had a specific mode of operation. There's no way of getting away from that. Regarding *Go Plastic*, for example, the sequencing was done on a [Boss] DR-660 drum machine and a Yamaha QY700 sequencer. These things have their specific idiosyncrasies. Certain options are ruled out by using those, and other options are promoted. Certain things are harder to do than they would be on other machines, so you get guided away from some things and towards other options. In any case, you have the result of what happened. That, in a way, is the best articulation of how those different machines were making me operate as a composer, at the time.

YOU'VE BEEN QUOTED AS SAYING, "IN ORDER TO PREVENT MYSELF FROM BEING FULLY INCORPORATED INTO ANY MUSICAL GHETTO, I HAVE TO INCORPORATE EVERY MUSICAL GHETTO INTO MYSELF." HOW DOES THAT APPLY TO SQUAREPUSHER TODAY?

I must admit, hearing you say that now, that just sounds really pretentious. I think I had a point, but I think I might have been trying to phrase it in a way to just deliberately annoy people. Nowadays, I would say what I was trying to convey was something along the lines of "[I'm] trying to just keep mobile." One of the problems of working in the music industry is that it's best for the companies you work for to market you in a quite simplistic fashion. What I've always tried to do is to keep those attributes fluid, which makes me quite an awkward proposition in terms of the marketing process. But that's exactly what I want to do. I want to stay relevant. I want to make things which people actually buy, but I don't want to be a slave to all of those processes. The one-dimensionality, which I perceive as being a convenient thing to people

Squarepusher

Shobaleader One's *d'Demonstrator* is out now on Warp. squarepusher.net

Read this interview in its entirety at XLR8R.com/136extras.

console. It seems to sound a bit clearer. If anyone thinks this record sounds quite a lot clearer than my older work, that might be a reason. As far as instruments, they're not necessarily instruments that I've not used on recordings before, but I've tried to develop new ways of processing them. Even though a sound is originally coming from an electric guitar, there's quite a lot of processing in between the guitar and the recording equipment, so you don't necessarily hear it as a guitar.

LET'S TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT EARLY SQUAREPUSHER. EVEN THE COMPLEXITIES OF *GO PLASTIC* WERE ATTRIBUTED TO USING SOLELY HARDWARE. HOW DID THOSE MACHINES HELP SHAPE YOUR SOUND?

Well, each machine determines, to an extent, what's done with it. Each machine that I was using in those days—as much as I would try to use it in an open-minded fashion, and try to keep reassessing and

marketing music, I think is very damaging. So, I've gone on to try to be inexplicable. To try to incorporate so much into what I'm doing that it can't be summarized sensibly—that there is no way of getting down on paper exactly what Squarepusher is. And even if you've succeeded at one moment, next time, you're going to have to think about it again.

So how do you make a classic, fat rave bassline? If you're Moby you go out and buy Joey Beltram's old analog synth. "About 18 years ago... there used to be a store called Rogue Music [in New York], and I bought this Jupiter 6 that no one wanted," the techno legend recalls between mixing sessions for his new, as-yet-untitled album. "I saw Joey Beltram a few days later and I told him about it, and he told me that days before that he had gone in and sold his Jupiter 6 to Rogue Music, so I inadvertently bought his!" While it certainly isn't the only way to make a killer bassline, Moby has over the years carved out a reliable method for doing such things. Want to make a '90s hands-in-the-air club jam? Here's what Moby recommends. *Ken Taylor*



Moby

1

BUY JOEY BELTRAM'S OLD ROLAND JUPITER 6 SYNTHESIZER

The Jupiter 6 is basically an old Roland analog synth. It has, I think, three different oscillators. It's a big, heavy monster. Analog synths all kind of do the same thing, but this one just has some really weird filters and processors that do very bizarre things to the actual sound. I think Joey's iconic rave tracks all used this synth. On my first single, "Go," I did a remix called the Rainforest Mix, and it had this monstrous, noisy, distorted bassline on it that was made with the Jupiter 6. There's nothing tasteful about it. Like, if you were a well-mannered house producer and you wanted a delicate, subtle listen bassline, you wouldn't use [this synth]. If you wanted something that sounded like shards of glass bouncing around in someone's brain, that's what this is designed for.

2

PLUG IT INTO A ZVEX DISTORTION PEDAL AND/OR AN ELECTRO-HARMONIX PITCH-SHIFTING BOX

Zvex pedals are made by this one guy, and he hand-silkscreens the art on all the pedals. They have really great circuitry so they sound wonderful... The actual synth itself makes some really interesting sounds, but I recommend [combining it] with some Electro-Harmonix pitch-shifters. I like taking effects pedals that are designed for guitars and using them with synths. You just end up with completely random, odd results... There was an old rave track I made called "Thousand," and I'm pretty sure I used an Electro-Harmonix pitch-shifter on that.

3

RUN IT THROUGH A DBX COMPRESSOR

A lot of producers, when they try to make basslines, they think the key is to keep adding low end to it. And there's a really strange, subtle relationship between how effective a bassline is and how much low end it actually contains. If it has too much low end, no one can play it. Compressors actually take a big low-end-y bassline sound and make it more usable. If there's too much bass, it actually means that you won't hear anything else in the song. For me, the simple combination of a good old analog synth, a couple of guitar distortion/pitch-shifter pedals, and a good compressor is what you'd ideally need to make interesting basslines. Again, not for making smooth, tasteful R&B basslines. It's more for making iconic, three o'clock-in-the-morning-hands-in-the-air insane basslines.

4

MAKE SURE NOTHING DIGITAL IS INVOLVED IN THE SIGNAL PATH

The truth is there are a lot of plugins and digital synths that make remarkable old rave basslines, and I think that they're amazing. But for the purpose of this article, it's almost too easy to use a plug-in to make a great-sounding rave bassline. It's a lot more satisfying if you have an old analog synth that barely works, some crummy effects pedals, and a weird old DBX compressor—it's going to have a personality and a character that will be untouchable by anything that would exist in the digital realm.

Moby's new album is due out next year on Mute. moby.com

Check out Moby's classic rave podcast over at XLR8R.com/136extras.

Cocteau Twins'

ROBIN GUTHRIE



Robin Guthrie's *Carousel* is out now on Darla. robinguthrie.com



Read this interview in its entirety at XLR8R.com/136extras.

I TRY TO HARDLY TOUCH THE GUITAR...
I LET THE ELECTRONICS DO THE WORK

When it comes to the creating the gauzy, otherworldly guitar atmospheres of the shoegaze and proto-Brit-pop scenes, Robin Guthrie has probably had his hand in a greater number of iconic records than even Kevin Shields. With a list of production credits a mile long—including records from Chapterhouse, A.R. Kane, Felt, Lush, Medicine, and the Wolfgang Press—and a peerless back catalog of recordings both solo and as a guitarist and producer in the legendary 4AD band Cocteau Twins, Guthrie continues to collaborate and help other bands realize their ethereal, dreamy sounds. About 10 years ago, he decamped to northwestern France for the quiet(er) life: a countryside home/studio near Rennes. We caught up with him in a not-so-quiet moment between production takes. *Ken Taylor*

XLR8R: WHAT TYPE OF STUDIO SET-UP DO YOU HAVE NOW?

Robin Guthrie: I lived in London for a long time and I owned commercial studios, and Cocteau Twins had some really nice places to work. But I got out of that whole business because my life turned into running studios and not making music. I was going off, at that time, with a little mixer and an ADAT machine in my car and driving off into the country, just to get somewhere away from all that to work. And now [living out in the country], it's come full circle... I have like an old-school take on modern technology... Basically, I've got a computer, a digital console, and I don't use any audio interfaces. The console Firewires into the computer with 32 ins and 32 outs. Then, all my analog equipment interfaces via the console into the signal path. So I use my favorite analog outboard and everything is hardwired in; I don't need a patch bay because I've got a million channels on this thing. And then I mix down onto the stereo bus on the console and out of that into another computer, which I use effectively for mastering or mixing. So it's old-school, like using a 24-track and a two-track. There's no mixing in the box, and there's absolutely no latency issues because I don't run through a processor.

HAS YOUR APPROACH ALWAYS BEEN OLD-SCHOOL, OR WAS THERE A TIME WHERE YOU WERE TRYING OUT A LOT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND THEN DECIDED, 'NO, THIS ISN'T FOR ME'?

I was the fucking idiot that bought Sound Tools [Pro Tools' predecessor]. I paid two and a half thousand fucking pounds for a 500 MB hard disk, when the size of hard disks you could buy were about 20 MB. I was a big early adopter, and a big spender in the late '80s, early '90s. Even before I started to do music, I was doing computers, because when I left school I worked for an oil company, and they were teaching me computers in the late '70s. I always had this computer

knowledge and skill, so when the digital stuff came along I just held off until it was good enough. A lot of the 1980s digital recording was very short, staccato sort of sounds, because if they were using samplers, they had a very limited amount of sampling time—really, 8-bit quality. Once they got into streaming onto hard disks and actual audio streaming, that's when I made the jump over.

YOUR SOUND HAS MORE OR LESS STAYED IN A VERY SIMILAR VEIN THROUGHOUT, THOUGH.

It doesn't matter what equipment I use, it sounds that way... I believe I've replaced that gear-slutness with competence and ability. I know that I can make music that sounds like me pretty much anywhere. It's what you do with the things, not what the things are... Also, the way I tackle the electric guitar as an instrument. I try to hardly touch the guitar; I'm a very gentle sort of player, and I let the electronics do the work. It's quite an opposite approach from the vast majority of electric guitar players who bash the hell out of their instrument.

WAS THAT THE CASE EARLY ON FOR YOU AS WELL?

No, no, I was a teenage punk rocker early on... I had a terrible lack of confidence that I could actually play properly because when I first picked up a guitar, all my friends *could* play properly, and I couldn't. I still kinda wanted to be in a band... And I pretty much soon found, by me playing my guitar through effects—at that time there was not really a lot of effects out so I was just cannibalizing things and making my own things, and I just started to make this sort of noise that was really just kind of fucking... you know—I sort of just bypassed the having to learn how to play Eagles songs. ... It was just taking that noise and making it pretty. Music sort of touches me emotionally, or whatever; it makes you tingle and does all sorts of things like that... so making noise that was pretty was very tingly [*laughs*].

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN PROCESSING GUITARS?

The order that you put your effects in. Also, don't think that the combined sound of two effects is the same as adding what the two things would be if they were individual. For me, I like to make the effects do the work. I like to build the sound. The choice of guitar is sometime not very [important]; I usually pick up one that's nice to play or with new strings on it. It's not necessarily the amplifier or the amp sound or model. It's really just where you put the knobs and the order you put things in.

IF YOU WERE TO PLACE THREE EFFECTS IN A SIGNAL PATH, WHAT ORDER WOULD THEY BE IN?

Distortion, chorus, and delay are the three obvious ones. You can get some really nice, more unusual effects by putting the chorus or harmonizer after the delay, wobbling the whole thing... just flipping those two.

SO EXPERIMENTING WITH THE PLACEMENT IS KEY?

Everybody has to find their own thing. I can only give guidelines on how to make a guitar sound like me. I've not really managed to make it sound like anybody else yet... I'm not a great fan of the guitar as an instrument. I'm not very interested in it. I've had my moments, and years ago you would've gotten a different answer. Now I'm just in that place where I'm kind of less interested in the technicality of the whole thing; I'm much more interested in the emotion—and that's a terrible way to do a technical interview [*laughs*], but without these emotional elements to start with, you've got fucking nothing. You're just some guy with a laptop that doesn't have a fucking girlfriend.

As one-third of Portishead, Bristol-based producer Geoff Barrow has used the mixing board as an instrument to arrange haunted electronics, percussive cast-off, and furrowed laments. He's also produced "traditional" records for bands such as The Coral and The Horrors, helping to hone rough ideas in the studio with instructions of "half of a little bit, or a whole lot of it," as he describes his informal way of applying EQ, compression, and other things. However, with his recent turn as drummer of BEAK>, a Krautrock-infused trio, and as a musician and producer for no-wave politico Anika (who has a dubby album on Stones Throw), Barrow has adopted a live tracking, overdubs-free approach to raw, crawling groove he finds especially fulfilling. Eschewing the idea that recording should indulge every snare smack and leave creative balance for the mix, Barrow took a moment to discuss discordant beauty and his projects' philosophy that "it's better to use fewer channels and make more decisions." Tony Ware

XLR8R: THE BEAK> AND ANIKA RECORDS ARE SAID TO HAVE BEEN RECORDED WITHIN TWO WEEKS. FOR COMPARISON, HOW LONG DID THE RECORDING OF PORTISHEAD'S *THIRD* TAKE?

Geoff Barrow: It's kind of weird, as a lot has been made of the timeframe of [*BEAK>* and *Anika*], where I really think it's more about the ethos. Compared to *Third*, I don't think they're an awful lot different, in a sense that if something works it works and if it doesn't it doesn't; [on] *Third* it just took longer to make things work... for me anyway. An Anika or BEAK> track immediately sounds good when everyone is in the studio playing it, and everyone is happy [with] what it represents, while a Portishead track like "Magic Doors" [from *Third*] was written in 2003/2004, and I wasn't happy with it until much later. It does my head in, though, the constant fiddling. The idea you could go in, put the mics up and it be about material and vibes rather than using production to make ideas work, rather than running a beat through a tape machine for sibilance—that's where I'm at [now]. It's a whole computer generation, fucking about on this endless quest of seeing what a guitar could sound like if it were simulated as playing through a car stereo with speakers made of tin pans. And if someone wants that, fine for them, but even though it's these infinite possibilities, it feels so restrictive. For BEAK> and Anika, just having three musicians and a singer in a room is a pleasure. A band like Can would just gather, record, and they would sound so balanced and at the same time capture all these dynamics. I've become fascinated with this, because I think it's been lost among all the mastering and optimizing plug-ins.

BEAK> AND ANIKA HAVE A PROMINENT AMOUNT OF REVERB AND PANNING, HOWEVER, SO A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF COLORATION HAD TO HAVE BEEN PRECONCEIVED. DID YOU PLOT OUT ANY PROCESSING CONCEPTS?

I think sometimes musicians hide bits of average writing through production, and the availability of aural exciter plug-ins has made masking and manipulating a stock thing, which is quite boring. Whereas people like Joe Meek [a British engineer/producer of the '50s/'60s known for creative mic'ing, "distorting," and comping] were just fucking mad. The reggae guys, they had a driving force of trying to create otherworldly, spiritual music. So there's still an element of that, which you can find in the reverbs, which do more to expose rawness than hide it. What I really love to hear is a really amazingly written song that's off-kilter, and that doesn't hide its wrongness... bands like the Plastic People of the Universe, or the [Jimi] Hendrix stuff recorded with Curtis Knight—it's just rough, and captures what happened there. There were elements of doing a mix, but not to correct anything. I'd rather capture a mistake than work in a constantly unfinished state.

SO, THE TONAL BLEEDS THAT CAN BE HEARD IN THE QUIETER MOMENTS ON SOME BEAK> TRACKS ARE INTENTIONAL "MISTAKES"?

Everything is bleeding on everything, but it's not the point—it's just what is part of it. There's no isolation; you couldn't strip the guitars, it's all over. The Anika dubs sound the way they do because you can't get rid of the vocal, as it's being performed in the room with the band coming from an amp, and it's quite exciting. BEAK> is three vocals going through a mixing desk into a little Roland Space Echo into an amp, and the amp is mic'ed up, so it's all happening

Portishead's GEOFF BARROW



Anika's *Anika* (Stones Throw) and BEAK>'s *BEAK>* (Ipecac) are out now. myspace.com/beak2009

in the room with the instruments. It's actually a lot less considered than it seems like it's being perceived, though. The instruments are being set up. I don't care what mics are on anything as long as they're on something. I don't care about maximum level. If the instruments sound good, it will sound alright. Really, I'm impatient as well—I want to put something through. I'm not bothered if something goes into another piece of gear and loses dB and volume, or you shouldn't use this stereo plug when a mono will do. Don't get me wrong, I don't think BEAK> and Anika are the greatest records I've ever recorded and you have to dig it. It's just a lovely feeling to capture what's happening on a creative, musical level, not to turn oneself inside out on a production level.



2010 hasn't exactly been a banner year for dubstep. Wobble-craving bros are threatening to take over the scene, each month an obscure new musical strain further splinters the genre, and the music is taking more and more whippings from critics and tastemakers alike. Nevertheless, even with all the mud thrown in dubstep's direction, a few of its originators remain pretty much untouchable, both in terms of respect and their continued dedication to moving the music into the future. Mala (the south London producer known to his mum as Mark Lawrence) is one such producer. Not only has he been instrumental in keeping the extremely bass-heavy style evolving, but he and his Digital Mystikz partners-in-crime Coki, Loefah, and Sgt. Pokes are also responsible for continually bringing dubstep to the masses via their genre-defining DMZ night in Brixton. We tapped Mala for a few tips on how he crafts his crazy, unrelenting low-end sound, both from the practical and philosophical standpoints. Ken Taylor

Mala

1

ADOPT THE RIGHT APPROACH

I'm not sure how my sound was created exactly, but for me, music is about uncompromised expression. I feel music is a chance to be honest about what I feel and want to say. I think words are too often abused, misunderstood, and sometimes overrated, so for me, instrumental music speaks directly and personally. Frequencies shape the world we live in.

2

BE CONSISTENT

I don't really have a preferred synth, as I always enjoy working with new sounds, either from hardware or software. I consistently use a soft synth made by Spectrasonics called Trilogy. I'd say I create 99% of my subs and basslines from it. They released a new-and-improved version last year called Trilian, which, for me, works even better than Trilogy. So I'm happy! It's seriously solid software for when you need that weight in your sound.

3

FIND WHAT WORKS WELL...

I use Battery by Native Instruments for programming my drums. I find Native Instruments plug-ins to be really user-friendly. Manipulating and controlling sounds is really simple but deep. Its drum-kit library is solid, too. I love this plug-in because you can import your own sounds, which is more important than the presets. Simple and easy to use, but when you explore, you see its deep capabilities.

4

...AND STICK WITH IT

It's fair to say Propellerhead Reason was like school for me. Back in 2000, it was what I started making music with. Redrum was perfect for drum programming. It had some heavy presets and the choice to bring in your own samples. I used the Subtractor virtual synth layered with Malström graintable synthesizer for sub and bass, and the NN-Xt sampler did everything else. Importing my own sounds and being able to mash them up was all I wanted to do. It's a real friendly program to use, which allows me to get ideas down quickly. I think it's one of the most important factors to consider when new to making music.

5

THEN ARRANGE YOUR SOUNDS ACCORDINGLY

I tend to start with more natural-sounding synths than the mental ones. So for pads and melodies, orchestral sounds layered with alien sounds usually work best for me... get some movement between the layers. Gforce's M-Tron is a great-sounding synth... off harmonics with a unique texture. I have some hardware synths, too. They help me understand more about sound every time I create.

Digital Mystikz's "*Education*" b/w "*Horrid Her*" is out this month on DMZ. myspace.com/malamystikz

Einstürzende Neubauten

As the legend goes, in 1980, a West German punk named Blixa Bargeld set out to make an "ethnic" record. He wondered about his "authentic" background while listening to an Ethiopian folk record, and his attention turned to the debris that littered his own hometown's streets. Along with the then-15-year-old Alexander Hacke, Bargeld's group, Einstürzende Neubauten (German for "Collapsing New Buildings"), began crafting literal industrial music, with rhythms bashed out of scrap metal, pipes, power tools, shopping carts, and other West Berlin detritus. Thirty years later, the band is noisier than ever, having just released *Strategies Against Architecture IV*. Here, Hacke tells us more about the group's DIY weapons of choice. *Cameron Macdonald*



"IT'S GREAT TO PUT THESE THINGS TO USE JUST FOR THE THREAT THEY BEAR. IT'S LIKE TAMING WILDCATS AND SNAKES."

UNUSUAL RECORDING SPOTS

One place we recorded was a motorway overpass, and there was a hollow air-conditioning shaft or a vent inside the [pillar]. There were some homeless people living there and a few clothes lying around... It had a very unique sound—you could stomp your feet and actually drum on the walls. There was great reverb... We also did some recordings in a water tower. It was a metal room in the shape of a ball. That was acoustically very interesting... your own voice was totally dry. If somebody was talking to you just a few feet away, you'd have a lot of echo and reverb that was completely dry, like you were in a completely dead room or a vacuum.

CONTACT MICROPHONES

So much of our work is researching materials and how to mic or pick up the sounds. With a contact mic, you can dive into the depth of these objects. It's what you hear when you hold a resonating object to your ear; it's a completely different way of recording than with a regular microphone. The contact mic really started our business.

JUNK METAL

We liked to do these nighttime excursions and look into building sites, and we were able to find wonderful objects. Air-conditioning parts were very useful as drums. The ribs on a shopping cart are like strings on a harp—you can play it if you pick it up properly with a contact mic. You can also put all of your shit in it for transportation!

THE THIRSTY ANIMAL

What's typical for Neubauten instruments is that they have far-reaching associations with their names. A lot of the times, the names of things don't really describe what they are, but they are an image associated with a sound or the looks of them. For example, there was a brass instrument I used to play in the very early days, which was called the Thirsty Animal. It just had this very melancholic, wailing sound that we called "The Thirsty Animal." It was just tubing that you find in any home-improvement shop. You could not only blow into it to make noise—you could also smoke with it.

POWER TOOLS

We still use drills, mostly without the actual drill parts. We like the ones that go at different speeds, and it was the invention of the AccuDrill that was actually very helpful for our purposes. We've also been using power tools for installations, like attaching a wire to the rotating part of the power tool and then plucking or hitting other objects with that wire. It's also an energetic thing; there is so much force and power in a little tool like that. It's great to put these things to use just for the threat they bear. It's like taming wildcats and snakes.

TAPE LOOPS

We would sometimes have tape running around the studio like, say, a 20-meter-long tape loop that was suspended all the way around the studio over microphones and cymbal stands. We would also experiment with cutting holes into tape, burning it, or piecing it together in weird ways. Not just quarter-inch but the multi-track, two-inch tape. We would cut the tapes and physically destroy them and see what we could come up with. Studio owners were not very happy with that.

THE BASS SPRING

We still use it—it's almost organically attached to Andrew [Chudy (a.k.a. N.U. Unruh)]. We use it as a bass drum. You can hit the actual spring, but you can also hit the frame and use the spring as a resonator. I think it came from an automotive shock absorber. There are different kinds of springs; some are meant to be squeezed and others are meant to be pulled. This one is meant to be pulled, like a counter-weight.

THE NOODLE

The Noodle is actually a noodle, like pasta. It's called The Noodle because one version was like a drill but it is derived from an African instrument where you have a string held up by two rods and the rods are connected to a sort of drum, and you use the drum as a resonator. If you hit the two rods together, the pitch of the string would get lower. That was the inspiration for it—it was a cover version of this African instrument, except on a much larger scale.

Strategies Against Architecture IV is out now on Mute. neubauten.org

SUBCULTURE

CLUB

BROOKLYN PHOTOGRAPHER **GRANT WILLING** PONDERES NATIONALITY,
STRENGTH, AND LOYALTY AMONGST SECESSIONISTS AND BURZUM FANS.

Words: KEN TAYLOR





Previous, opposite, left,
and bottom right:
From the *Svart Metall*
series

Top:
From the *Fils de la Liberté*
series

WERE YOU TO

survey the Tumblrs, Flickr's, and other blogs of the average 20-something photographer today, the subject matter might boil down to something like this: bored kids doing bong rips at basement shows; hipsters in parks or at the beach, the edges of the pics dappled with leaked light or sun flare; harshly lit nighttime street scenes of homeless people in disarray; other random displays of public drunkenness; maybe the odd skinny girlfriend, tattooed and topless, sporting Ray-Bans with a can of Budweiser in hand. This is not the world in which photographer Grant Willing operates. With a style that belies his mere 23 years of age, the Brooklyn-based Willing,

instead assembles carefully crafted, often staged, and seemingly disparate images—a crumpled Capri Sun package, a black leather jacket, a snow-covered mountain, and a balaklava-clad man with an axe—into narratives that evoke notions of loyalty, place, and belonging. His recent series, *Svart Metall* and *Fils de la Liberté*, which have both been made into books, consider those themes and draw parallels between Québec's separatists and Scandinavian death-metal enthusiasts—without ever taking an obvious or didactic approach. We spoke with the Colorado native about the current landscape—photographic and otherwise.

***XHR8R*: Did you study photography formally?**

Grant Willing: I studied photography at Parsons in New York City. I think a lot of my school experience was just becoming acquainted with this whole new world and situation. It was really just a time to figure out what you wanted to do and then trying to figure out how to start doing it. Some of my favorite classes were the design lectures; they were classes I hated taking during school because they weren't strictly photography-related. Now they're what I have the fondest memories of, since they were so much broader in scope than a lot of my photo classes.

You seem to travel a fair bit to shoot. What cities or places do you think deserve the most attention right now, from a photographic standpoint?

It's hard to say... A lot of the time, traveling is more just used as a way for me to be removed from my normal routine and be able to see a new place with a fresh perspective. I do a lot of my work in the mountains in Colorado still, but lately my favorite places to travel to are eastern Canada and Scandinavia... I think it must have something to do with growing up near the mountains, but there always has been an overwhelming sense of allure and mystery to these places.

What sparked the *Svart Metall* ("black metal") series? The Scandinavian influence is so strong that it's surprising to find out the photos were all made in the US.

I started working on *Svart Metall* in 2008 because I had a mental block on another series I had been working on for a while. I needed to just make some new work that wasn't beating on the same ideas I had been working on throughout most of college. I was listening to a lot of black metal during this time and had just started getting a little more interested in the history of the genre, learning more about bands, and so on.

During a trip I took in Pennsylvania, I just started taking photos with a lot of these black metal ideas in my head and I just kept building from there. Actually, there are several images in the series from Scandinavia; I spent a few weeks there in 2009 to really just take in this landscape and ideas I had been researching and obsessing over for a while.

How much of your work is staged, versus happened-upon? (ie. "Untitled (Axe)" and "Untitled (Sword)" seem very much staged.)

A lot of my work is staged and a lot is found or already existing. I think in the end, when an image is seen, it hardly matters, though. When I find something naturally, I'm usually going to spend just as much time making an image there as I would when I build a scene in a studio setting. And after all the work is made, it gets edited down in a way that is recontextualizing all the found scenes similarly to how a staged image is seen. I guess in that sense, I could almost say that most of my work is staged, but I have to go find it.

In that regard, do you feel like photographs have any obligation to be "true" representations of reality?

No, I don't think photography should have any obligation to do anything. At least in terms of an "art context." I feel that it's an antiquated thought to believe that photographs are truthful; it's an argument that can't really be settled and doesn't really change how images are read or function.

You run the Humble Arts Foundation's blog, and contribute to a number of other blogs and the like... How do you combat the fatigue of looking at so much work?

It's just something that I've always loved to do. I remember in school, some people would say to not look at too much work because it can sway your own style or something. I've always felt the opposite. I love looking at what other people are doing and just seeing how everything is moving along. I don't think I could ever see too much good work. When something is really amazing, I can't get enough of it and I continue to seek it out. It gets to be an exciting feeling to find some new artist you haven't seen before and to really be into his or her work.

Do you always approach photography as attempting to create a series, or do you find that themes will emerge on their own?

I don't try to approach making new work with too many preconceived ideas in my head. I feel like I always have a vague, abstract sense of what I want my work to end up like, and my process is just like chipping away at clearing up that mental image. I think it's okay to start with an idea of what you want to make work about or of, but just not pinned down to the point where if something doesn't work out it destroys how the rest of your work operates.

What got you interested in Québec separatist politics, which influence the *Fils de la Liberté* series?

I became interested in this actually through black metal; there is a large amount of nationalistic pride in the music that comes from Québec. Similar to the *Svart Metall* work, I just started exploring the history and themes a little more deeply. For this work, I wanted to be a little more abstract with where my ideas were coming from, though, and looser with how I handled the images.

I'm curious about how you selected the shots for that series. Can you explain how the images connect to one another? Or, what your thought process behind it was, and what you're intending to convey?

Fils de la Liberté was a movement in Québec in the 1830s that was named after the Sons of Liberty movement in the US. It was basically a group of people who were frustrated with how they were being represented in the country and tried to revolt and create a movement for seceding from the rest of Canada. This idea is still popular; there is a large Québécois independence movement now, also. Like I had mentioned, I became interested in this all through black metal, but because I was

not personally affected by the specificity of it, I decided to make images with a more loose interpretation of the situation. My images are about separation as an overwhelming emotion and conformity within a society that you don't necessarily agree with. There are some hints at nationalism that are more true to my heritage, but I didn't want the work to read the same way as *Svart Metall*, especially considering it started from a similar place.

What makes a good photograph?

This is always a hard question because there are so many answers depending on the situation. For me, a good photograph is really just an image that is telling something. I don't think there is too much else besides that. It is something that has a point and conveys it in a way that was intended.

grantwilling.com

GO
Win Grant Willing's *Svart Metall* book in this issue's contest, page 8.



"IT'S
AN
ANTIQUATED
THOUGHT
TO
BELIEVE
PHOTOGRAPHS

ARE
TRUTHFUL."



Opposite:
From the *Svart Metall*
series

Above:
From the *Fils de la Liberté*
series

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ALBUM REVIEWS

DARKSTAR

North

Hyperdub



THE LONDON BASS OUTFIT ADDS
A SINGER AND DELVES INTO
THE POP WORLD, WITH
MIXED RESULTS.

One of the most compelling releases of 2009 was Darkstar's "Aidy's Girl is a Computer," a single that turned the post-dubstep soundworld on its head by amplifying the simple, sweet murmurs of robots in love. That wasn't its only hook. The song hummed with just enough sub-bass thunder from below, hit the right targets in the mid-range with melodic synth lines and vocal trickery, and used two gorgeous breaks to inspired, dramatic effect. It is a stunning five minutes of near-perfection that holds up strong over a year later; it's so good, in fact, that it overwhelms and undercuts the other nine tracks on Darkstar's debut LP, *North*.

That's not to say the full-length is short on ideas or charm. It has those in abundance. It is a fresh direction for Steve Goodman's (a.k.a. Kode9) Hyperdub label—arguably the most innovative electronics-based imprint of the last five years—away from its UK rave/garage/2-step origins and into brave new, often lovely, pop territories.

The overall mood of *North* is melancholy, bleak, funereal—the music evokes cloudy, windswept days and vague pains of the heart. But unlike

labelmate Burial, who explores similar sonic terrain, Darkstar doesn't realize its sad mission. This sounds more like the Postal Service, Radiohead, or Orchestral Maneuvers in the Dark than it does anything resembling bass music in orientation. However, it should be said that some of the same emotional triggers used in Burial's body of work—primarily echoes of good times forever gone—are in full play here.

The main problem is that the songs too often feel like sketches. The punchline is sold too quickly, the finish too abrupt. Just as "In the Wings" starts to soar, ironically, it begins to fade. It's a beauty of an opener, a slow jam built around simple piano chords, that you want to hear played out over an extended period. Its length, at less than three minutes, seems abridged, as if the better version was twice as long and had more juice. It leaves you feeling cheated.

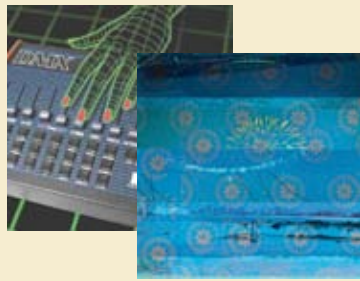
"Gold," the pitched-down remake of a Human League b-side, has the architecture of a synth-pop classic. But just when you want it reach back for something extra, the song comes up short. Where "Aidy" seems to pull you inward, "Gold" remains aloof, bored with

the cleverness of its interpretation—a bit too much like the worst tendencies in Radiohead, frankly.

The best track is the shimmering instrumental "Ostkreuz," which recalls ambient German titans Cluster, and Bowie and Eno's *Low* period, albeit heard through a granular filter. This technique is also used to process the vocals of singer James Buttery—a recent addition to the group made up of originals James Young and Aiden Whalley—on "2 Chords," "Deadness," and "Under One Roof," all delivered with suitable pangs of regret set against epic waves of swelling sound and forward-marching rhythms.

Darkstar members say they consciously chose a distinct other path for *North* after the group's 2009 breakthrough. It takes courage and confidence to change directions mid-stream and challenge expectations, but it isn't always the best decision. The fan base in the already small world that fell in love with "Aidy's Girl" was likely waiting for a robotic dance force to emerge, not a sobering declaration that the party is over before it begins.

Walter Wasacz



DMX KREW WAVE FUNK

Rephlex

For the past 15 years, Ed Upton has proven that he's a pious disciple of '80s electro, but his 10th album as DMX Krew, *Wave Funk*, calls for an intervention to break his addiction. In the past, Upton and his arsenal of vintage analog synths and drum machines could easily melt away the 25 years since electro's heyday. But on *Wave Funk*, he departs from his vocal-driven electro pop and falls into abstract synth instrumentals that often don't quite gel. "Flanging" and "Garden Gate" find Upton trying his hand at crunk rhythms, but the efforts come across as stale. He even indulges in '80s kitsch with the sitcom-friendly funk of "Mr. Blue" and "Particle Burst," and although both tracks might reap an initial chuckle or two, they don't hold up beyond that. His ventures into dark moods fare worse, as queasy melodies and legless beats hinder "Byzantium" and the aptly named "Funeral Procession." That said, there are still a few specks of gold in the muck—the strutting groove of "Gravity Boots" has a nice, sleazy vibe and "Get Down (To the Sound)" would have been fine, romantic acid-funk if it wasn't for those annoying chord progressions. Ultimately, *Wave Funk* is the sort of record that follows each step forward with three steps back. *Cameron Macdonald*

GOLD PANDA LUCKY SHINER

Ghostly International

Among many other things, Gold Panda's first full-length, *Lucky Shiner*, is a veritable curveball. The young Essex-based producer had unintentionally set himself up to join the expansive beat-scene continuum with the release of his "Quitter's Raga" single in 2009, and "You," from early this year. The music world thought it had Gold Panda pegged, and happily so, until this record surfaced. Within the first three songs of *Lucky Shiner*, a trio of different musical styles emerges: shuffling, sample-heavy beatscapes; precisely crafted micro-techno; and vivaciously homespun field recordings. Gold Panda harnesses those distinct sounds over the course of *Lucky Shiner's* 11-song tracklist with an emotional grace exceeding that of most other producers, especially those with only three years of experience.

Excursions into mesmerizing ambient techno make up the bulk of the album, and are at the

core of its most rewarding songs. "Snow & Taxis" travels on an incessant pulse of bass decorated with layers of carefully diced audio—samples which make up the track's elated melody and still allow enough sonic space for the skittering snares to dance unimpeded around the thumping four-on-the-floor rhythm. Tunes like "Marriage" and "Same Dream China" apply similar approaches, and yield equally heartwarming results. In the end, *Lucky Shiner* stands as a proper introduction to a producer who cares as much about moving your body as he does your soul. *Patric Fallon*

MARC HOULE DRIFT

Minus

It's unfortunate that Berlin's Marc Houle is probably best known for "Techno Vocals," his cheeky 2007 stab at the trend of pitching down vocals in minimal dance music. The plodding parody of that piece lies in direct contrast to the stark, depressing tones of most of the tracks on *Drift*, his fourth full-length for the Minus imprint. The glassy longing of Pantha Du Prince's *Black Noise* is a nice reference point for this eight-song collection, but Houle dives into darker, more claustrophobic territory than Hendrick Weber ever has.

Thus, while the delayed guitar lines on a track like "Sweet" allow for feelings of longing, the piece is quickly followed by the album's title track, a searing, near-terrifying club workout



that recalls a more refined Pom Pom, or a more intense Robert Hood—deep pads ride below wormy bass and high-frequency, siren-like scrapings. The sweaty nightmare continues on tracks like "The Next," which contains bass that is so heavily delayed, it brings back memories of bad acid trips. While pieces like "Hitcher Man" and "Hammering" are more straightforward minimal tracks, Houle bleeds the album's pieces so seamlessly that such pedestrian moments don't take away from the overall feeling of dark paranoia and dirty, sweaty club spaces. *Drift* is most certainly Houle's best work to date, as well as the perfect compliment to the alienating cold of wintertime. *Thomas Rees*

MODESELEKTOR MODESELEKTION VOL. 1

Monkeytown

After two hotly tipped albums wedged into the grimy alley between dubstep and IDM, German duo Modeselektor emerged in a collaborative mode, teaming up with Apparat, touring with Radiohead, and remixing everyone from Ninjaman to Björk. Now Gernot Bronsert and Sebastian Szary are taking a curatorial turn with *Modeselektion Vol. 1*, a compilation that delves deep into dubstep's offspring and relatives, finding common threads across Europe and the States and uniting them through hard-edged glitch, savage edits, and an excess of bass.

Released on Modeselektor's own Monkeytown label, *Modeselektion* dodges the "one-label" or "artists we personally know" restrictions that often result in sound-alike comps, and ties together established names like Apparat and Tadd Mullinix with newer artists like Ikonika and SBTRKT, all of whom display their own creative takes on dark, twisted dubstep. 2562 offers a loopy thumper calling back to the earliest days of the hip-hop/house merger, eLan throws a glamorous party that sounds like electroclash at quarter speed, and Housemeister's "Kristall" backgrounds some spoken philosophy on the divine with shimmering keys, all enough to make you forget the sole misfire, Ramadanman's droning "Pitter."

True to their "more is more" philosophy, Modeselektor went utterly berserk in this first volume, presenting a 77-minute disc plus digital bonus tracks, videos, 12" singles, and an LP limited to 666 copies. That's your cue to get into a dubsteppy stomp and throw up the devil horns as Gernot and Sebastian intended. *Rob Geary*

SMALL BLACK NEW CHAIN

Jagjaguwar

Lately it seems there's nothing the music world (read: Brooklyn) loves more than a little minimalist chill-pop. The past year has seen the distinct rise of the faddish chillwave, and nipping at the heels of the movement is New York outfit Small Black, whose *New Chain* is an alluring minimalist pop record. Filled with fuzzy sonics and M83-esque Casio beats, *New Chain* simultaneously channels the Human League's catchy new wave, Gary Numan's electric strangeness, and Brian Eno's atmospheric quirk. The album's second song, "Search Party," catches the listener's attention with quick, darting synth notes without overshadowing the track's soft, milkshake vocals. "Photojournalist" is a wondrous slice of hazy dream-pop, and "Crisp 100s" and "Goons" find the band operating in a similar fashion, layering echoing melodic vocal manipulation over messily blended yet unintrusive electronic beats.

As *New Chain* drifts forward, Small Black's heavy-lidded, even-tempered tone is much less in-your-face than that of its poppier, more electro counterparts, such as Toro Y Moi and Pictureplane, as the group has elected to paint a much dreamier, more laid-back soundscape. Nonetheless, in all honesty, *New Chain* isn't so very different from the rest of the Bushwick bulk. What is worth returning to, however, is the fact that the music offered is effortlessly lovely, memorable, well-transitioned, and oddly addicting. In a hype-driven scene, Small Black isn't obnoxiously proclaiming its prominence—the band's musical prowess speaks for itself. *Rachel Brodsky*

TEEBE ARDOUR

Brainfeeder

Flying Lotus—the Brainfeeder label head who is releasing the debut album by friend and fellow beat aficionado Mtendere Mandowa (a.k.a. Teebe)—is quoted as saying that Teebe's first full-length, *Ardour*, "sounds like an island vacation." To that statement, I'd add "... in autumn." Mandowa—who is also an accomplished skater and painter—has crafted a sublime debut LP brimming with the color and vibrance of summer's steamy days, but all varnished in the hollow crackle and chill of the oncoming months of fall. It's a beautiful sound that remains throughout Teebe's 18 tracks, and makes the nearly hour-long *Ardour* float by like an invigorating breeze.

Like his beat-scene peers Baths and Asura, Teebe's music relies just as heavily on melody as it does rhythmic sounds—if not occasionally more so. The ringing chimes of "Burner" and the woozy guitar strums of "Wind Loop" predominate the shuffling beats that periodically interplay with those shimmering elements. Pianos outshine all other sounds on "Moments" and "Lakeshore Ave.," and the orchestration of harps, violins, and other strings provide captivating centerpieces for "King Bathtub" and "Humming Birds." It's this wealth



WORTH THE WEIGHT: BRISTOL DUBSTEP CLASSICS

Punch Drunk

Tom Ford's Punch Drunk label wasn't Bristol's first big dubstep imprint—that honor goes to Rob "Pinch" Ellis' Tectonic Records, established in 2005 to release material by Moving Ninja, Loefah, and Random Trio—but the label's commitment to broad musical diversity has unquestionably impacted dubstep's demeanor. Punch Drunk first entered the fray in '06 with Monkey Steak's spooky "Lighthouse Dub" 12" and Ford's first release as Peverelist, "Erstwhile Rhythm," but ensuing years have seen a varied output, including Rob Smith's reggae-influenced sounds as RSD, Gemmy's lumbering, sharp-edged beats, and Guido's grimy bass concoctions.

BJØRN TORSKE KOKNING

Smalltown Supersound

When Oslo's Bjørn Torske released the playful and personal *Feil Knapp* three years ago, the boundless space-disco scene he had helped grow and nurture was more poised than ever for a masterpiece. But instead of some big, daring statement, he focused on making music that was rustic, lived-in, and human. On *Kokning*, he retreats farther into that mindset, showcasing his style, his quirks, and the windswept vistas of his productions. While there are moments of stoic beauty, like the restrained strings of "Gullfjellet," other songs sound more madcap. On the 12-minute "Furu," Torske's patience and rich sonic palette result in muted horns and swampy synths that almost sound personified, resulting in a wacky mini-epic that recalls his playful 8-bit dub track "Spelunker." The stretched-out bass and sparse percussion of "Slittle Sko" sound like a happy accident, akin to discovering that a 45 played at 33 1/3 rpm achieves a suspended elegance. As time melts during the song's gradual arc, little embellishments and tight bass and guitar lines mesh like the gears of some fantastic toy. "Langt Fra Afrika" detours into tribal percussion, while the crispy guitar and billowy synths of "Nitten Nitti" achieve a mirthful strut. Torske's use of space in the studio is exemplary, yet *Kokning* doesn't hit the same heights as *Feil Knapp*, nor does it feel as breezy. But Torske remains a true personality who revels in the opportunity to indulge his sense of play. *Patrick Sisson*

Patrick Sisson

Worth the Weight: Bristol Dubstep Classics brings tracks by Punch Drunk's roster together with local producers from associated labels Hench, Tectonic, and Apple Pips. Big-room dubs like Jakes' ashen wobbler "3kout" and Joker's shiny, synth-led "Holly Brook Park" share space on the two-disc set with subby classics like Pinch's sparse "Qawwali" and Komonazmuk's driving and garage-leaning "Bad Apple." Dubkasm represents for Bristol's reggae soundsystem culture, Appleblim and Peverelist merge techno with dub, and new names Hyetal and Wedge offer future rhythms to slap speaker boxes silly. The sounds are diverse, but dubstep's predictable ruts are duly sidestepped.

The collection's 26 tracks strike a cool balance between spacious and minimal bass numbers like Headhunter's "7th Curse" and epic grime instrumentals such as Joker's "Stuck In the System." New material like Guido's jazz-minded "Mad Sax" or Forsaken's melodic and steppy "Hypnotised" remind us that Bristol has always had an artistically and culturally diverse dance community. As dubstep's popularity expands in conjunction with its increasingly derivative productions, *Worth the Weight* proves that Bristol remains a city committed to heavy lifting. *Tomas Palermo*

BUBBLIN'



NICOLAS JAAR



New York, NY

In 2004, Nicolas Jaar—who was all of 14 years old at the time—received a Villalobos album for Christmas from his father. So yes, one could say that he was on the right track pretty early on, at least as far as dance music was concerned. Born in NY, Jaar actually spent much of his childhood in Chile before returning to the Big Apple at age 11 and delving into house and techno production as a teenager. By the time he was 17, Jaar had his first proper release, 2008's *The Student EP* on Wolf + Lamb. Subsequent records and remixes have appeared on Circus Company, Get Physical, and his own Clown and Sunset imprint, which is currently set to release a couple of Jaar tunes as part of a special collaborative LP called *Inés*, to be released via a custom USB. When he's not putting the finishing touches on his debut album, which is slated to drop next February, Jaar also finds the time to study comparative literature at Brown University, where's he currently a junior.

nicolasjaar.net



CEDAA

Bellingham, WA

Twenty-year-old Simon Ho grew up in a musical household. Dad used to build guitars, his sister was an R&B fanatic, and Ho himself played drums in the school marching band. That love of percussion led his father to buy him a copy of Reason 2.5—which Ho still uses to make tunes—and when combined with his discovery of juke a few years back, Cedaa's production style was born. Both his "Tiffany" b/w "Simba" single on Car Crash Set and *Old Growth EP* on Dave Quam's Free Bass offer a melodic, synth-infused take on Windy City sounds.

myspace.com/cedaatree



DARK SKY

London, UK

Just when London's post-dubstep scene seemed like it couldn't possibly spawn any more talent, Tom Edwards and Matt Benyayer of Boogaloo Crew hooked up with classmate Carlo Anderson and started dropping quality tunes under the name Dark Sky. 2010 has seen the trio unleash the classic rave worship of "Something to Lose," the 8-bit stomp of "Ghost Notes," a killer 2-step remix of the xx's "Crystallised," and the darker, bass-loaded *Frames EP*, the debut offering from the upstart imprint Pictures Music. A Dark Sky track was also included on the recent *Ninja Tune XX* compilation, and a future release on Blunted Robots is in the works.

myspace.com/darkskyuk



MAGICK MOUNTAIN

New York, NY

As dubstep increasingly becomes a dirty word in electronic music circles, maybe people can start repping for trance again without fear of serious reprisal. It's a bit of a risk, but consider NY native and University of Chicago alum Harry Bornstein an early (re-)adopter. He only has one release to his name—the "One for My Ego" b/w "Plains" single on The Pop Manifesto—but it's clear that Bornstein is a fan of blissed-out sounds, even as he mines classic '90s diva house for inspiration, as his unpolished songs are bathed in lush melodies, hazy synths, and subtle drone.

myspace.com/magickmountainlovesu



SUBEENA

London, UK

Sabina Plamenova has spent time in Turin and Berlin, but her music is unmistakably London, both in the sense that it's rooted in dubstep, and also because its multitude of sounds ultimately defies simple genre definitions. The 24-year-old producer has hit many of the usual stops—she previously hosted a show on Sub FM, has been championed by Mary Anne Hobbs, took part in the 2008 Red Bull Music Academy, and used to co-run the Imminent record label. These days she has her own imprint, Opit, which just released her "Neurotic" b/w "Wishful Talk" single that includes remixes from Epytrixx and Ghosts on Tape.

myspace.com/subeena

GUEST REVIEWS: BENOIT & SERGIO



Benoit & Sergio's 2009 debut EP, *What I've Lost*, is a lesson in sophistication, each song displaying a level of musical maturity rarely reached by producers in a whole lifetime of work. Vocals, melody, and dancefloor-ready rhythms all come together to create a vision of house music that could live in the club or the solitude of your bedroom. Their latest release, "Midnight People," out now on Spectral, is a head-turning club track that uses a deep and dark piano melody reminiscent of Chicago house's finest moments, and serves as an interesting follow-up to the romanticism of *What I've Lost*. The Berlin-DC duo's ascendance may seem explosive given the pair's limited discography—which will soon include upcoming releases on Visionquest and DFA—but it's all the more reason to see what they're listening to these days.

myspace.com/benoitandsergio

JOHN ROBERTS

"GLASS EIGHTS"

Dial

It's as if Arvo Pärt and Theo Parrish (at his most abstract) sat down at a cafe in Berlin, became good friends, and then decided to make a record. Every move on Mr. Roberts' debut LP has the complex, deliberate feel of a chess game between elegant minds. Deep yet clear, gentle but not dull, strong without rage, full without overflowing.

WOOLFY

"LOOKING GLASS (EXTENDED MIX)"

DFA

We wish we could go back in time with this song and play it for Charlotte Rampling around 1982, and then walk along the River Seine with her, talking of the future. We think she would love the song's melancholy, and the way its synth lines grow slowly toward Woolfy's forlorn plaint. The Canyons remix is beautiful and forlorn, too.

SEUIL AND dOP

"PROSTITUTE (VISIONQUEST REMIX)"

Eko

We discovered this EP driving at night through the privileged neighborhoods of LA toward summer's end. The Visionquest remix is perfect for the beast of any night. Epic and weird, its casino-style voice-overs and *Dirty Harry* hi-hats are underpinned by a tension between bass and kick that only a trip to that massage parlor on Wilshire Boulevard can release.

MATTHEW DEAR

"YOU PUT A SMELL ON ME (BREAKBOT REMIX)"

Ghostly International

Breakbot's remix culls something unexpectedly light from the black-rock quarry of the expert original. There's a neo-Prince flavor to the groove, the passing falsetto, and the big LinnDrum clap and snare.

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11 / '10 COMPONENTS

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MSRP: \$499 (single turntable); numark.com

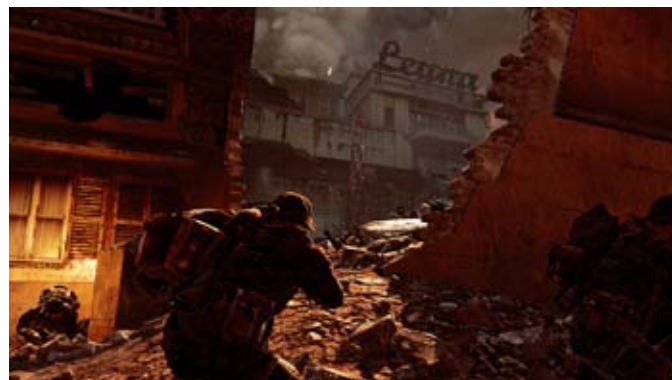


The ever-evolving landscape of DJ hardware seems to be experiencing something of a surge, with companies like Denon and NI releasing new flagship DJ controllers. Now Numark has its own digital turntable solution at the ready: The V7, itself a successor to last year's NS-7. Combining the physicality of vinyl with the utility of digital formats, Numark has produced a very solid entry. Essentially, the V7 is like a streamlined version of Serato Scratch, thanks to the metal casing, the impressively high torque, and the incorporation of real vinyl "records" and slipmats on the platter. You can either use one or two units, paired with a mixer. On its own, a single V7 can control both "turntables" virtually, whereas two decks mimic a traditional set-up. The rubberized buttons and knobs are backlit, and control all the essentials: pitch, transport commands, loop points, FX, and music-library navigation. The control is precise and intuitive, and the included Serato ITCH software works flawlessly (once you import or "prepare" all of your music files for it). Not having to worry about needle skips is definitely nice, but it does result in a slight lack of physical control. To compensate, like the NS-7 before it, the V7 uses Strip Search—essentially a touchstrip at the top of the unit that lets you scroll through songs. It's a smart concept and is generally well executed, but navigating files seems a bit haphazard. Still, Numark has produced what is easily one of the finest digital turntables to date, and for those unconcerned with size and weight, it will be tough to beat. *Evan Shamoon*

Call of Duty: Black Ops

Activision; X360, PS3, Wii

Remember college in the '60s? It was pretty much the best, wasn't it? Oh, you didn't go to college? You went to fight in Vietnam instead? I see. That's not so groovy, man. But hey, then you should totally be excited about *Call of Duty: Black Ops*! The latest in the mega-popular *CoD* series takes on those missions that "never happened" during the Cold War, placing you in the grimy boots of a Black Ops soldier stationed in other global hotspots of the time, like Cuba and Laos. New weapons, like crossbows and ballistic knives, have been added to the heart-pounding firefights, as well as a couple of opportunities to take on the Reds from the air. As always, expect a top-notch presentation, with the likes of Gary Oldman returning to his role as a Soviet soldier from the series' last WWII entry, along with the always-awesome Ed Harris in the role of one of your teammates. No flower-power hippie bullshit here! All the way with LBJ! *Ryan Rayhill*



Propellerhead Reason 5 production software

MSRP: \$299; propellerheads.se



The latest iteration of the venerable music software studio adds several new virtual machines to its rack, the most exciting of which has got to be the Kong Drum Designer. Each of its 16 pads can control any of 16 drum channels, each using its own sound source module—including the NN-Nano (a simplified version of the NN-XT sampler), as well as Nurse Rex (a mini Dr. Rex) and seven synths, creating endless fun for drum programmers. And while previous versions of Reason couldn't sample audio directly, the latest lets you do so from within several of its instruments. The interface has been streamlined in various subtle ways, and the new "Blocks" mechanic for arranging your song is a superb advancement that will surely be mimicked for years to come. While there's still no support for VST plug-ins, Reason is still the most bug- and crash-free music program out there, and runs extremely well on even the lowliest of machines. *Evan Shamoon*



Roland Gaia SH-01 synthesizer

MSRP: \$799; rolandus.com

Incredibly fun and easy to use, Roland's Gaia SH-01 analog modeling synthesizer has the straight-ahead, old-school "do what works" approach of analog tone shaping with all the modern digital treats. Plug the unit in (or run it on batteries!) and you can dial up synth heaven in pretty short shrift. With its simple-yet-powerful three-tone interface, useful effects bank, mono/poly modes, and intuitive arpeggiator, the Gaia lets you set the controls for the heart of the sun quicker than you can say "Kraftwerk meets MGMT." No extensive editing and scrolling through tiny screens here—just bold, hands-on interaction that has you conjuring up modern or vintage patches in no time at all. There is a lot of depth for the dedicated tweaker here as well, with an impressive 64 notes of polyphony and a handy USB interface on board. Highly recommended as an affordable home studio all-rounder and convenient battery-powered live sonic weapon. *Ryan Edwards*

Aiaiai TMA-1 headphones

MSRP: \$199; aiaiai.dk



The first thing that strikes you about the TMA-1 is its design: distinctive and minimalist, the hyper-clean silhouette is underscored by a glorious matte, rubberized finish. Pick them up and the solidity is immediately apparent—this is a solid set of cans, and one unlikely to break under even the most drunken of circumstances. The headphone cable is removable, and the ear cushions pop off in favor of a higher-isolation pair for noisy clubs, included in the box. These were designed primarily as DJ headphones, and as such, they are heavy on bass and loud as hell, with spacious sound and a generally warm tone. Aiaiai and Danish design firm KibSi consulted 25 of the world's best "DJs" to bring the TMA-1 to life (Flying Lotus, 2ManyDJs, James Murphy, to name a few), and the result is a superb set of cans for disc jockeying or any other type of jockeying, really. *Evan Shamoon*

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow

Konami; X360, PS3



Despite the recent pansy-ing up of the undead in film, there have been many awesome vampires throughout the ages—Jim Carrey, Grandpa Munster, Eddie Murphy, just to name a few. But few hold a candle to the OG blood lover himself, Dracula, who has time and again risen from his perennial dirt naps to torment the living, namely the Family Belmont... videogame-wise, anyway. So it should come as little shock that once again a Belmont finds himself up against impossible odds as he does battle with the agents of evil in *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow*. While most 3D console stabs at the venerable *Castlevania* franchise in recent years have fallen short of fans' expectations since 1997's phenomenal *Symphony of the Night*, *Lords of Shadow* not only restores the gothic franchise back to its former glory, but it does so with such style and panache that it outdoes just about every other adventure title of the past couple years. It's evident that the game's creators have a love for the older titles in the series—the 8-bit and 16-bit predecessors in particular—while understanding what today's gamers expect. As Gabriel Belmont, you whip, slice, and magically assault the minions of darkness in an effort to put your wife's soul at rest after a Drac attack sends her to what seems like an eternity in Limbo. The whole thing comes off like a hybrid of *God of War* and *Shadow of the Colossus* with the heart of *Castlevania* that pumps pure bad-ass. A joy to play, visually vibrant, and aurally engrossing, due in no small part to the 120-piece orchestra that created the epic tunes, as well as top-notch voice work by such guys as Patrick Stewart and Robert Carlyle, *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow* is one of the most engrossing titles you'll play this year. And nary a sparkly pretty boy in sight. *RR*

Epic Mickey

Disney; Wii



Mickey Fucking Mouse: Millions the world over know him as the instantly recognizable, squeaky-clean harbinger of all things nice, benign, and Disney. However, did you know that he started off as kind of a mischievous prick? And that he has an older brother? An older brother that is also a rabbit? This is all brought to light in the monumentally impressive, and uncharacteristically dark, *Epic Mickey*. Created by cyberpunk RPG legend Warren Spector, *Epic Mickey* places the famous rodent in a once delightful retirement community for little-used Disney characters created by the Fantasia sorcerer Yen Sid (Disney backwards, get it?). Now, however, due to Mickey's boundless curiosity and severe negligence with a can of magical paint years earlier, the world is blighted with ink-blot goons and clockwork fiends made to look like the mouse's closest pals turning it into Cartoon Wasteland. Seriously, you will see a Donald Duck with missing eyes and Terminator robot arms as well as Goofy made to appear like some sort of trashcan zombie. Don't even get me started on the mechanical monstrosity that is Dumbo. Truly frightening stuff. In order to return things back to sweet, sunny normalcy, Mickey must use Yen Sid's magic paintbrush to create helpful items or use paint thinner to destroy tarnished objects and baddies within the world who are led by the Phantom Blot in conjunction with Mickey's aforementioned brother, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, whose jealousy over his sibling's legendary ascent to superstardom has driven him completely nuts. And to take things even further down WTF Avenue, you can choose to either be the lovable, heroic Mickey we all know... orrrr you can chose to be somewhat of an asshole. Really. Either way you choose to play opens up new quests, alliances, and items as you traverse post-apocalyptic, steampunk versions of famous Disney attractions like It's a Small World, Cinderella's Castle, and even the Twilight Zone Tower of Terror. Admit it, every bit of this sounds as awesome as it does crazy. And it's a giant teacup's worth of both. RR

DJ Hero 2

Activision; X360, PS3, Wii



Getcha scratch on, son, cuz here comes *DJ Hero 2*! Expanding further on last year's terrific turntablism game, *DJ Hero 2* features freestyle scratching, head-to-head DJ battles, megamixes, and over 80 mash-ups of 100-plus songs (Chemical Brothers, Rihanna, Jackson 5, Snow—that's right, Snow.) all mixed by "major" dudes like RZA, David Guetta, and Deadmau5. Additionally, *DJ Hero 2* allows for vocals this time, so your friends that are too frightened of touching the turntable controller will have something to do while you mix and crossfade your way to the main room at Limelight! If it were 1991, that is. More than likely, you'll stay right where you are. Sorry. RR

Goldeneye 007

Activision; Wii



Remember college in the '90s? It was pretty much the best, wasn't it? Music wasn't totally lame yet. The internet was only just starting to ruin/make everything great. But if there is one thing that epitomizes just how awesome the '90s were, it has to be *Goldeneye 007* for the Nintendo 64. Am I right, people? Well, just go ahead and pause your tape of last week's *Friends* (spoiler: Chandler "bings" Monica), kick off your Texas, and crack open a tall, cool Zima, because *Goldeneye 007* is back! Kind of. This modernized remake of the 1997 classic has taken a few liberties—Daniel Craig replaces Remington Steel, and the story is slightly altered, which in turn has altered more than a few of the levels. Also, no Klobb. But rest assured that the new *Goldeneye* can still rock a dorm room with an online multiplayer mode that allows you to once again roam the Facility as Jaws, Oddjob, and Baron Samedi! Serenity now! RR

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Kinect
Microsoft; X360



Finally throwing their hat into the motion-controlled ring, Microsoft bestows Kinect upon us this month. However, there is no handheld wand for you to wave around like an idiot. No, for this one, you, the idiot, are the controller! The Kinect's camera accurately recognizes you and your bodily flailing, translating it into action within compatible games, which include everything from sports and fitness titles to racing sims and even *Harry Potter*. As a party starter, you would be hard pressed to do better than *Dance Central* (MTV; X360), which takes you through over 600 dance moves to classic tracks from the likes of M.I.A., Lady Gaga, and Bel Biv DeVoe(!). *RR*

Gran Turismo 5
Sony; PS3



The biggest name in racing games makes a triumphant return for the first time in almost six years with *Gran Turismo 5*. As it has been since its 1997 inception, realism plays heavily into *Gran Turismo* with over 1000 licensed vehicles, including everything from rich playboy rides like Lamborghinis and Mercedes-Benzes to the Toyota Prius and Tesla for you eco-conscious hippies. For the first time in the franchise's history, *Gran Turismo 5* will feature detailed vehicle damage as well as—wait for it!—Go-Karts! Why neither of these things was included up until now is a real mystery, but with so many cars and 70 different rubber-burning tracks, including a few real-world circuits like Daytona and the UK's Dunsfold Park, we doubt you'll have much time to ponder such enigmas. *RR*

Fable III
Microsoft; X360



Role-playing games are a tricky proposition. Sure, everyone wants to experience high adventure, but who wants to spend most of their time in faraway lands pouring over stats, menus, and inventories? You never saw Aragorn or Conan obsessively checking their hit points, did you? No, by Crom! *Fable III* does away with the numbers and instead displays the results of your actions as a member of Albion's royal family right before your eyes. When it comes to items, those will be stored at your castle as your butler (voiced by John Cleese, no less) keeps watch over them. But more interestingly, all of your deeds will be reflected within the game world. Act like a murderous, thieving scoundrel and both the land around you and your subject's loyalty will quickly begin to deteriorate, along with your good looks. But keep everything in order, and you got yourself one hell of a kingdom. Of course, just like in real life, your choices will not always be so easy. Getting drunk on mead, banging fair maidens, and contracting kingly STDs sounds great, but it can complicate things. Trust us. *RR*

Rock Band 3
EA; X360, PS3, Wii



It's that time of year again! Time... to rock, that is! Or at least get as close as a videogame ever has with *Rock Band 3*. While all the old music-game trappings remain intact, *Rock Band 3* offers quite a bit more this time around for both casual and hardcore players. Most notably, *Rock Band 3* adds the ability to kick ass on... the keyboard. As such, the powers that be have selected an even more diverse setlist this time around featuring many keyboard-heavy tunes like Marilyn Manson's "Beautiful People" and The Doors' "Break on Through (To the Other Side)." However, the glaring omission of Rush's "Subdivisions" is something that will need to be addressed. While thrashing on keys may sound unlikely, keep in mind that this can also be slung over your shoulder—keytar-style—so you don't feel quite as lame next to your axe-wielding bandmates, and it's also MIDI compatible for when you feel like laying down some actual tracks. Two new guitar controllers will also be available for those willing to work a little harder in the game's "Pro" mode, which offers players a chance to really learn their chosen instrument. The first is an actual guitar from Fender that has electronics built into it that detect where your fingers are on the fretboard, while the other, also from Fender, has a button for each note on its fretboard. All 102 of them. *RR*

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OUTBOX

MARY ANNE HOBBS

At this point, Mary Anne Hobbs' name has become synonymous with electronic music. The musical icon has carved out an ideal niche for herself within the bass- and beat-heavy landscape via her lengthy career as a music journalist, radio broadcaster, and taste-making DJ. Using her BBC Radio1 Experimental program, Hobbs helped launch the careers of some of our time's biggest producers—Burial, Flying Lotus, and Joy Orbison, to name a few—and showed music lovers worldwide an enormous spectrum of exciting, new sounds. Hobbs recently left her post at Radio1 for a job in the media department at Sheffield University. We were lucky enough to e-chat with her about her time on the radio, her future, and her guiltiest pleasures. *Patric Fallon*

XLR8R: Growing up, who were a few of your musical icons?

Mary Anne Hobbs: Sex Pistols. My dad had banned music in our house when I was growing up, and he would routinely smash up my records, including all my beloved Pistols singles. But I would still listen to punk in the dead of night, under my blankets in bed, on a tiny transistor radio that he never found, on the John Peel show. Peel stood at the gateway to an alternate universe. He was the only evidence I had that this incredible place really existed. It was his call that led me down the path to where I'm standing right now.

When was your first music-related article ever published, and what was it about?

My own fanzine, *Krush*. I published it myself when I was 18 years old. I'd run away to London, and was living on a bus in a carpark with a band called Heretic. I worked for them as their lighting engineer, record sleeve artist, costume designer, and bus mechanic. I also did three other factory and bar jobs to pay for the publication of the fanzine.

If you didn't DJ under your given name, what moniker would you use?

Evangeline.

Your voice is recognizably warm and inviting on the radio. Does that change when you're just chatting with friends? Calling in take-out orders?

I used my voice as another instrument within the mix of sound that I created for my Radiol shows. I wanted it to sit easily with the other very progressive sonic textures on the programme. I'm probably a little louder in real life. :)

Now that you're off the radio circuit, what's next?

I have all kinds of new projects in the furnace for 2011.



I'm gonna continue to DJ live all over the world, and I will be curating stages for Sonar Festival in Barcelona in June 2011 and also Bloc Festival in the UK in March 2011. I've been helping Darren Aronofsky source music for his new film, *Black Swan*, and I'm delighted that Al Tourettes, Sepalcure, Jakes, and Kavsrave are now featured [with composer] Clint Mansell [on that] soundtrack. I hope to build on this film work, and continue to develop my own ghetto road movies at youtube.com/maryannehobbstv. I'm gonna write my autobiography, and of course, one day I hope to become a motorcycle stunt girl for Quentin Tarantino. :) On October 4, I take up my new role working at Sheffield University Union of Students as Media Development Coordinator. It's a wonderful place—great people, energy, spirit, and resources. It's not an academic job, but much more of a practical one, mentoring and guiding the students involved with the radio station, the TV station, and the newspaper, helping the next generation make the transition into the industry, and hopefully inspiring them to become challenging, intelligent, and pioneering. I'll always be a broadcaster. Radio is such a great passion for me, but right now, I'm ready to seize this new challenge out on the causeway of life.

What was running through your mind before your first show on BBC Radio?

Terror.

And before your last broadcast?

Honor.

Ever injure yourself while jumping around onstage?

I couldn't walk after the SMOG show at Miami WMC. My agent Sara had to push me back to the hotel in a shopping cart.

What's the strangest thing a fan has ever said to you?

A boy once posted on a public forum that a track I played on my Radiol show had actually saved the life of his suicidal brother. His message shook me to the core of my being. I've never forgotten it.

Favorite venue anywhere?

Low End Theory [at The Airliner in] Los Angeles. I've had the greatest experiences of my life playing there, and every time I attend, I know I'll come upon music I've never heard before in my life. Big up Daddy Kev, Gaslamp Killer, Nobody, D-Styles, and Nocando for the freshest, most forward-thinking booking policy on earth.

We know most of the good music you love, so give us your three guiltiest pleasures.

Justin Timberlake, Van Halen, and Chic.

maryannehobbs.com

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